

citizen of the State of the United States of America.

Now, many people have come to my office, and they have argued to me how really it is not different. Folks, it is different. That is what this election will be about. We treat them differently every day. That is what upsets so many people, that citizens of the United States of America can be treated in this fashion as this Congress deliberates action after action after action.

The remedy for that is statehood, or the remedy for that is independence, or the status quo, which would be Commonwealth. Those are the choices at the end of the day that the people of Puerto Rico will have to decide. Those are the choices in a fair and open and just manner that this committee presents to the plebiscite.

The people of Puerto Rico will make a determination of which status they want to determine. If the Olympic team is so important, then I guess they can take Commonwealth. They can continue that. But then they have to look the citizens in the eye and say, but by the same token, you cannot share in the benefits of all the other citizens of the United States.

If it is less important, they might decide that the great athletes of Puerto Rico can run on the American team and participate, and they can share in equal benefits. That is what this is about. And at the end of the day, this bill presents that in a fair and open fashion.

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Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, today has been an education for a lot of Americans watching this debate. Perhaps some people have learned about the passions surrounding this debate. Maybe some people have come to understand at least a little bit how proud the people of Puerto Rico are to be American citizens, how proud we are to live in a democracy in which the concept of free and open debate not only survives but thrives.

Of course, Mr. Chairman, I am a product of that freedom. I am an American citizen born on the island of Puerto Rico, came to the mainland, was elected to Congress and stand before this body a full-fledged voting Member of this great legislative body. I have a great respect for this institution, but I am concerned that a process is about to be imposed on the people of Puerto Rico that is anything but democratic.

I appreciate the intention of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to allow for the self-determination of the people of Puerto Rico. I have said this before and I will say it again. This bill is not about self-determination. It is about statehood. This bill is the product of a process that did not consult the very people it affects the most.

In 1990 a commonwealth status definition was agreed to by the authors of

H.R. 856 that was acceptable to the interested parties. The chairman of the Committee on Resources voted for the definition at the time. The current ranking member of the committee voted for the definition at that time. The definitions were acceptable to the parties that represented the statehood, commonwealth and independent options.

But now it seems that the very definitions that were agreed to unanimously in the House of Representatives are not good enough. My colleagues seem intent now on forcing a vote on Puerto Rico that includes new definitions that many Puerto Ricans strongly disagree with. I will tell my colleagues that if they truly want self-determination for Puerto Rico, they will vote against this bill.

I have heard my colleagues whom I have great respect for tell me that I should vote for independence. I have heard my colleagues tell me that I should vote for statehood. The fact is that I do not really have a choice, because if this plebiscite is held under this bill, we will see a 51st State, not because the people of Puerto Rico want to be a State. If they wanted that, they would have voted that way in the plebiscite of 1993. No, they will vote for statehood because under the definitions in this bill, commonwealth is not really an option.

The authors of this bill have already said that their intention was to eliminate commonwealth status as a viable option and they were successful. In fact, the authors of this bill did not even offer commonwealth as an option in the plebiscite when they originally wrote this bill.

Mr. Chairman, many people in this Chamber will tell us that they know what is best for the people of Puerto Rico. My response is why do we not let Puerto Rico decide what is best for Puerto Rico? Why do we not give our participants equal input in determining how a status bill should be written? Why do we not give all Puerto Ricans the right to vote on that question?

I do not think that this House should be in the business of telling the people of Puerto Rico what is best for the people of Puerto Rico. They should make that decision. That is what self-determination is all about. That is why I ask my colleagues today to oppose this legislation.

Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, I think this is a really complicated debate for people who are just learning about it for the first time over the course of today. I have had the benefit of having the last couple of years in the Committee on Resources to listen to this testimony consistently, and to have had the chance to visit Puerto Rico, as I said earlier.

What really came about from my many hours of listening to testimony is this issue that I think is something that makes the gentlewoman from New

York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIERREZ) so upset, and that is, this Congress decides what the fate of Puerto Rico is whether or not the people of Puerto Rico like it or not.

The thing about it is, I am in total agreement with the sympathies and concerns of the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIERREZ) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ). I am as outraged as anyone else, as the gentlewoman just said, that this Congress should think that it could make any decision affecting Puerto Rico without the opinions and the people of Puerto Rico being part of that decision-making process. That is why I am for statehood. That is why I am for this bill.

Mr. Chairman, the gentlewoman from New York said that this commonwealth definition was decided by the committee very unfairly. Let us understand, if we decided what the commonwealth definition was based upon the way the commonwealth party wanted it decided, we would have had a little bit of everything we wanted.

I heard this commonwealth definition. I said, "This commonwealth definition sounds pretty good." I said, "It sounds so good I want Rhode Island to have commonwealth status." I bet every other Member in this place would like to have commonwealth status the way the commonwealth party in Puerto Rico wants it to be defined.

But, Mr. Chairman, we have a responsibility not to define commonwealth status in any partisan terms but to define commonwealth status based upon the laws of what commonwealth means. As much as my good friends say that commonwealth status means that we are a nation, that commonwealth status means this or that, or guess what the United Nations said, the proof is in the pudding.

Whenever a bill comes up that relates to Puerto Rico, it is referred to the Committee on Resources. Why? Because the Committee on Resources has jurisdiction over Indian and insular affairs, meaning territories. Meaning no matter what we may say about the Supreme Court decisions, no matter what we may say about U.N. resolutions, the proof is in the pudding.

We are sitting here debating this. We would not be debating this if there was a bilateral pact. If Puerto Rico really had the say in this matter, they would have said, "Hey, U.S. Congress, we don't need you to give us the right to vote. We have the right to vote."

Puerto Rico could not do that because they are under the Territorial Clause of the United States Constitution, like it or not. Mr. Chairman, there is the old Snickers ad that says, "No matter how you slice it, it still comes up peanuts." The fact of the matter is, no matter how you define commonwealth, it still comes up Territorial Clause. That is the bottom line here.

That is why I think this is a good bill, because ultimately the people of

Puerto Rico will have a say in their final determination and finally get some representation on this floor.

I want to conclude by saying the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ) has taken on this issue singularly, being the Resident Commissioner who has not had the chance to vote but who has taken his position very seriously and has been a tireless advocate on behalf of the people he represents. On the eve of this historic vote, I want to salute the gentleman from Puerto Rico for the job that he has done on behalf of the people of Puerto Rico; the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG), as well as the gentleman from California (Mr. MILLER).

Let us support this bill, and let us end colonial status for 3.8 million people and finally make them full citizens of this country with voting representation in this United States Congress.

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, I first of all would like to thank the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG), the chairman of our committee, for the dedicated amount of work that he has put into this bill. He lived the frustrations of being a territory, so he really believes in it and feels it. The people of Puerto Rico, not only the people of Puerto Rico, the people of this Nation will be grateful for the steps that we are taking here today, and I hope we take this step in the final passage of the bill.

I want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. MILLER), our ranking member, also for the dedication that he too has put into this bill, for being instrumental in doing away with all the suspiciousness that reasonable people would have about this bill and the definitions. We worked hard and we feel that our chairman, our ranking member and all of the members of the committee were very careful in making this bill a very, very serious and very objective bill.

I want to make also a special mention, when we started this bill, I had my very serious differences with the gentleman from New York (Mr. SOLOMON), the chairman of the Committee on Rules. But as we have dealt with this bill, the gentleman from New York has been a real gentleman. He has always kept his word. He has been a formidable opponent in this bill, but I must recognize that he has been a real gentleman. I would thank him for his dedication, also, to his job.

The gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY) and all the others that have worked hard on this bill, I want to thank them all.

In Puerto Rico, as I mentioned earlier, they are watching this on C-SPAN. I think this probably will be one of the most watched programs in Puerto Rico for a long, long, long, long time. Everybody is understanding what is happening here. Those who do not understand English, believe me, some relative or some friend or some fellow

workers there are translating the proceedings for them. They are hoping that their faith in this Congress, their faith in their Nation, in the United States, will be confirmed today.

Because, as we have spoken before, this bill is about self-determination. This bill is about the opportunity of 3.8 million U.S. citizens who have been disenfranchised for 81 years, for 81 years disenfranchised, where they have not been able to participate in the democratic process of their Nation. We have been part of the United States for 100 years it will be July 25, the American troops first landed in Puerto Rico in 1898. This Monday was precisely the 81st anniversary of our citizenship.

As we take a look at the procedures here today, one of my greatest sorrows and I am sure one of the greatest sorrows of the people of Puerto Rico is to find that the most adamant and vociferous opponents of this bill have been, one, a gentlewoman that was born in Puerto Rico and the other, a gentleman that was not born in Puerto Rico but is from Puerto Rican extraction, that they are opposing it at every instance, that the people of Puerto Rico have a chance for self-determination.

They have given a lot of reasons why this should not happen but it all boils down that they oppose this bill. They say that this bill is tilted toward statehood. That is not correct. This bill is not tilted toward statehood. This bill spells out the differences between statehood, between independence and between commonwealth.

For the first time, for the first time since Puerto Rico has been involved in plebiscite and their status, they are going to be voting on a bill that defines commonwealth as what it is. I want to read the definition of commonwealth because so much has been said. No one will disagree with this definition:

"Commonwealth. Puerto Rico should retain commonwealth in which Puerto Rico is joined in a relationship with and under the national sovereignty of the United States. It is the policy of the Congress that this relationship should only be dissolved by mutual consent."

That is a correct and precise statement that was carefully drafted by our chairman and by the gentleman from California (Mr. MILLER). Yes, I participated in the conversations. However, my decisions were not what made the final wording of this bill.

"Two. Under this political relationship, Puerto Rico, like a State, is an autonomous political entity, sovereign over matters not ruled by the Constitution of the United States. In the exercise of this sovereignty, the laws of the commonwealth shall govern in Puerto Rico to the extent that they are consistent with the Constitution, the treaties and laws of the United States."

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Congress retains its constitutional authority to enact laws it deems necessary relating to Puerto Rico.

What is false? That is exactly as it is. Everything in this bill is the truth, and that is what the people of Puerto Rico should be given a choice to vote on.

Mr. Chairman, I hope that all Members will vote for this bill, not only for Puerto Rico, but for the sake of this Nation.

The CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIERREZ).

The amendment was rejected.

The CHAIRMAN. Are there further amendments to the bill?

SEQUENTIAL VOTES POSTPONED IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 376, proceedings will now resume on those amendments on which further proceedings were postponed, in the following order:

An amendment offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS); an amendment offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BARR); and Amendment No. 21, offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIERREZ).

The Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the time for any electronic vote after the first vote in this series.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. STEARNS

The CHAIRMAN. The pending business is the request for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) on which further proceedings were postponed, and on which the noes prevailed by a voice vote.

The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The Clerk designated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 28, noes 384, not voting 18, as follows:

[Roll No. 33]

AYES—28

Bachus	Jones	Sensenbrenner
Campbell	Kingston	Shadegg
Carson	McIntosh	Sherman
Combest	Moran (KS)	Smith, Linda
Cubin	Paul	Snowbarger
Duncan	Petri	Souder
Herger	Radanovich	Stearns
Horn	Rohrabacher	Taylor (NC)
Hunter	Sanford	
Istook	Shaffer, Bob	

NOES—384

Abercrombie	Bentsen	Brown (OH)
Ackerman	Bereuter	Bryant
Aderholt	Berry	Bunning
Allen	Bilirakis	Burr
Andrews	Bishop	Burton
Archer	Blagojevich	Buyer
Armey	Bliley	Callahan
Baesler	Blumenauer	Calvert
Baker	Blunt	Camp
Baldacci	Boehlert	Canady
Ballenger	Boehner	Cannon
Barcia	Bonilla	Cardin
Barr	Bonior	Castle
Barrett (NE)	Borski	Chabot
Barrett (WI)	Boswell	Chambliss
Bartlett	Boucher	Chenoweth
Barton	Boyd	Christensen
Bass	Brady	Clay
Bateman	Brown (CA)	Clayton
Becerra	Brown (FL)	Clement