

**PUERTO RICO STATUS REFERENDUM -- HON. DON YOUNG (Extension of
Remarks - November 10, 1993)**

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HON. DON YOUNG

in the House of Representatives

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1993

- Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, on November the 14th, the United States citizens of the people of Puerto Rico will vote in a referendum regarding their preferred relationship with the United States. This is an historic occasion for the people to finally decide if they want to be a permanent part of these United States.
- The statehood status definition is clear and consistent with legislative language used to admit previous territories into the Union. However, I am concerned with the highly unrealistic definitions of what constitutes the status choices of commonwealth and independence.
- In the interest of political comity, the current pro-statehood government of Puerto Rico permitted the parties advocating commonwealth and independence to supply their own definitions in the referendum law. The result has been a balanced referendum electoral law, but with exaggerated status definitions on the referendum ballot for commonwealth and, to a lesser degree, independence.
- It is ridiculous to suggest that the United States would ever agree to a commonwealth with permanent union between Puerto Rico and the United States. Only by being incorporated into the body politic of the United States can Puerto Rico be considered to be in permanent union.
- We are a democracy united by a Constitution which extends equal protection, rights, and privileges to all. The United States will not set aside over two centuries of reliance upon this near-sacred document to be 'bound by a bilateral pact that could not be altered, except by mutual consent.' Even the North American Free-Trade Agreement [NAFTA] allows a member to end the agreement with a 6-month notice.
- United States citizenship is endowed through the U.S. Constitution. It is through incorporation into the Union that one can obtain irrevocable American citizenship, not merely through some commonwealth guarantee. As unfortunate as it may seem, the citizenship of individuals born in Puerto Rico is not protected to the same degree as those born in a state or where the Constitution has been extended in full. This sensitive subject has been addressed and clarified many times in the recent years by the Congressional

Research Service, the Department of Justice, and in several congressional hearings.

- It is unfortunate that commonwealth purports to be able to obtain the full extension of Federal programs like the Supplemental Security Income [SSI] and food stamps allocations equal to those of the States, without assuming comparable financial responsibilities. It is a facade for commonwealth to infer that section 936 would be retained for very long in the future, let alone being reformed, thereby somehow assuring the creation of more and better jobs.
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- The independence definition makes a broad assumption that the United States would agree to let individuals in an independent Puerto Rico retain United States citizenship. When the people of the United Nations' trust territory in Micronesia chose to be a freely associated state with the United States, they were denied the option of U.S. citizenship. Many of the other claims of the independence definition are highly speculative as no benefit, program, service, or other right for Puerto Ricans under independence has ever been passed by both Houses of Congress.
- The United Nations has resolved this to be the Decade of Decolonization. November 14th will be an opportunity for the people of Puerto Rico to decide how they want to end this decade and century under the United States flag. This is a time for the people of Puerto Rico to ask themselves if they want to be full first class citizens as an equal permanent part of the United States. No other status option on the ballot, not commonwealth and certainly not independence, can realistically guarantee equality under the U.S. Constitution.
- I will be watching with intense interest and concern as the United States citizens of Puerto Rico choose from among the following referendum status definitions:

A vote for statehood is a mandate to reclaim the inclusion of Puerto Rico as a State of the Union.

Is a non-colonial status of full political dignity;

Will allow us to have the same rights, benefits and responsibilities of the Fifty States;

Is a guaranteed permanent union and an opportunity for economic and political progress;

Is a permanent guarantee of all the rights provided by the constitution of the United States of America--including the preservation of our culture;

Is a permanent guarantee of American citizenship, our dual language, anthems and flags;

Is complete participation in all Federal programs;

Is the right to vote for President of the United States and to elect no fewer than six representatives and two senators to Congress.

In exercising our rights as American Citizens, we will negotiate the terms of our admittance, which will be submitted to the people of Puerto Rico for its ratification.

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A vote for commonwealth is a mandate in favor of:

A guarantee for progress, our security and that of our children within a status of complete political dignity based on the permanent union between Puerto Rico and the United States, bound by a bilateral pact that could not be altered, except by mutual consent.

Irrevocable American citizenship;

Common market, common currency and common defense with the United States;

Fiscal autonomy for Puerto Rico;

Puerto Rican Olympic Committee and international sports self-representation;

Complete development of our cultural identity; with the Commonwealth, we are Puerto Rican first.

We will develop the Commonwealth within specific guidelines set forth to Congress. We will immediately propose:

To reform Section 936, assuring the creation of more and better jobs;

To extend Social Security Complementary Insurance (SSI) to include Puerto Rico;

To obtain Food Stamp allocations equal to those of the States;

To protect our other agricultural products, in addition to coffee.

Any additional changes will be submitted to the people of Puerto Rico for their prior approval.

Independence in the right of self-government of our people; and the enjoyment of all the powers and attributes of sovereignty.

In the execution of this inalienable and irrevocable right, Puerto Rico will govern itself by a Constitution that will establish a democratic government, protect human rights and affirm our nationality and language.

Independence will give Puerto Rico the necessary powers to attain greater

development and prosperity, including the powers to protect and stimulate our industry, agriculture and commerce, control immigration and negotiate international accords that would broaden markets and promote investments from other countries.

A Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with the United States and a transition process to achieve independence, in accordance with federally approved House and Senate committee legislation will enable; the continuation of acquired Social Security veterans and other benefits; Puerto Rican citizenship and that of the United States, for those who chose to retain it; the right to use our own currency or the dollar; free access to the United States markets; tax incentives for North American investments; Federal funding in an amount equal to the current allocation for at least one decade; and the eventual demilitarization of the country.

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