S10501
SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING PUERTO RICO
The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will report the resolution.
Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I am very pleased to join my colleagues in support of this sense-of-the-Senate resolution that recognizes the rights of U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico to decide their political future.
I publicly commend the distinguished Senator from New Jersey and the Senator from Florida for their outstanding leadership in bringing us to this point. Resolutions of this kind and legislation dealing with this particular issue have had a roller-coaster ride in this Congress. Were it not for the tremendous support of the Senator from New Jersey and the Senator from Florida, we would not be here tonight. So I publicly express, on behalf of all of our colleagues, our thanks to them for their leadership, their persistence, and their diligence in bringing us to a point where we hope on a unanimous basis this resolution will at long last be adopted tonight.
Very simply, the resolution states that the people of Puerto Rico should be given an opportunity to express their views on the political status of Puerto Rico through some form of plebiscite. President Kennedy once said, "The most precious and powerful right in the world is the right to vote in an American election."
The great Mexican patriot, Benito Juarez, once said that "democracy is the destiny of humanity." In the case of Puerto Rico, democracy is democracy denied. The destiny of Puerto Rico's political future should be in the hands of the people of Puerto Rico. Congress should pass legislation that provides the congressional framework to recognize and implement their decision.
Our Nation is built on democratic principles of equality, opportunity and the right of self-determination. Yet, American citizens on the island of Puerto Rico lack the rights to express the basic tenet of democracy, a government chosen by the people.
In the words of Thomas Jefferson, "That government is the strongest of which every man feels a part." In regard to Puerto Rico, formal recognition of these democratic ideals is long overdue. Since the end of the Spanish-American War 100 years ago, we have shared a social, economic, and political union with Puerto Rico. In 1917, Congress granted citizenship to Puerto Ricans. In 1952, the people of Puerto Rico took on local self-government. In 1963, President Kennedy called for self-determination for the people of Puerto Rico.
More than a quarter of a century later, we are still debating the issue in the Senate as 4 million Americans are denied basic democratic rights. I hope we will all agree that this is simply unad- 

The people of Puerto Rico have long 
demonstrated their patriotism to the 
United States. Tens of thousands have 
served in the American military. More 
than 1,200 Puerto Ricans have died in 
combat to preserve our democratic way 
of life.

Mr. President, I support the right of 
self-determination for U.S. citizens liv-
ing in Puerto Rico. That is why I am a cosponsor of S. 472, the “United States-
Puerto Rico Political Status Act,” which 
provides a congressionally recog-
nized framework for U.S. citizens 
living in Puerto Rico to freely decide 
statehood, independence, or the con-

As a first step, Congress should adopt 
this sense-of-the-Senate resolution this 
year in an effort to resolve the ques-
tion of Puerto Rico’s political status in 
a fair manner.

We must ensure we provide full 
democratic rights for all American 
citizens, including those who live in 
Puerto Rico.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. GRAHAM addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Sen-
or from the great State of Florida.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise 
to speak to this sense-of-the-Senate 
resolution with mixed feelings. I would 
have preferred to be speaking to 

in behalf of legislation that 
would have provided for the first time 
in the 100-year relationship between 
the United States and Puerto Rico for 
a congressionally sanctioned plebiscite 
giving to the people of Puerto Rico the 

of their desires for their political future.

Our colleagues in the House of 
Representatives passed such a plebiscite 
but, unfortunately, after months of 
hearings, we will not have the opportu-

present from the Energy and 
Natural Resources Committee to the 
full Senate such legislation. I commen-
t Senator MURkowski who made a 
valiant effort to do so, including 
developing legislation which I think could 
have been the basis of a consensus 

on this matter and would have resulted in 

favorable vote in the full Senate and 
the nucleus of a compromise with the 

House of Representatives.

But the world goes on. The Governor 
of Puerto Rico, with the concurren-

cence of the Puerto Rican Congress, 
called for a referendum on the political 
future of Puerto Rico to be held on De-
cember 13. It is important that, as 
a minimal statement of our commitment 
to the principle of self-determination, 
we adopt this sense-of-the-Senate reso-
lution and express our position in favor 
of that plebiscite and indicate that we 
will take its results with appropriate 
seriousness.

We recognize, and the sense-of-the-
Senate resolution proclaims, that the 
ultimate decision as to the political fu-
ture of Puerto Rico will be made by 
this Congress, but by giving the degree 
of recognition to the Puerto Rican-
called plebiscite on December 13 that 
this sense-of-the-Senate resolution will 
do; it will give additional standing, ad-

Mr. President, it is clear that we 
cannot continue with the status quo. A de-
cision is going to have to be made, and 
I believe made soon, as to what the per-
manent political status of Puerto Rico 
will be. We have had this expedience 
throughout America’s history.

After the first 13 colonies, there was 
the Northwest Ordinance which laid 
out the basic principle by which future 
States would be carved out of the large 
territories of America and joined to the 
Original States. And that principle in-
cluded the notion that new States 
would join with equal dignity, with 
equal political rights and responsibili-
ties to the Thirteen Original States. 
These have been basic tenets of our 
democracy which we are called upon 
to make available to the people of 
Puerto Rico.

My colleague, Senator TOTTICELLI, in 
comments last week made the state-

that our task is to completing 
that task begins by a 

in the hopes that the 


citizens of Puerto Rico, the 

of the nearly 4 million U.S. citizens who 

62, legislation that I introduced a year ago 
that, if approved, would establish a 

Puerto Ricans and fellow 
citizens the opportunity 
advocated by 

in the manner as it is determined 
by their government. That is not going to 
be the case. Time has not allowed 

So I hope that by next year the 

the results of another plebiscite in 
Puerto Rico that the Senator from 
Florida has just mentioned. That is 
why the resolution before us today, I 
think, is very important.

In accordance with their rights 
of self-determination, the citizens of this 
Nation—the people of Puerto Rico— 
acting through their constitutional 
process and elected representatives, 
have empowered themselves to conduct 
a vote based on the record created in 
the House and the Senate deliberations 
in the Congress since the 1963 vote.

The resolution of the Puerto Rican 
Congress is not self-executing, the 
resolution of Puerto Rico’s politi-

cal status is a Federal matter that can 
only be fully and finally resolved by 
an act of Congress. However, in the 
exercising of its powers in this regard, 
Congress must be informed by the 
free expression of the wishes of the 
citizens of Puerto Rico. Thus, this resolution 
recognizes that the coming vote will 
advance the process of self-determination.
within the framework of our great Nation's Constitution.

Contrary to rumors in Puerto Rico, there was no great intrigue or political reaction to videotapes from the local status campaigns that prevented the Senate from moving forward with legislation at this time. Rather, faced with the majority's insistence on a full Senate debate on the draft chairman's legislative mark, this body is doing the right thing by moving forward with a Resolution recognizing the need for further self-determination and recognizing the constraints placed upon it. I am proud of the Senate today, and I am proud of the people of Puerto Rico for seizing the day and advancing an act of self-determination that is based upon the arguments heard in the Congressional process which will continue next year. This action is good for Puerto Rico and serves the interests of our entire Nation as we move forward together to seek to resolve the territorial status dilemma that began 100 years ago. I wish now U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico well in exercising their God given right of self-determination. I hope they will join me in trusting that their voice will be heard and that Congress will act as it should. In America, we have alternative to democracy and desire nothing more.

I join with my colleagues from Florida, New Jersey—now the chairman of the full committee is here on the floor—to say to our friends and citizens of Puerto Rico that we ask them to go forward with their vote in December. We hope that that is an advanced expression to advance the cause of statehood, but most importantly to advance the cause of self-determination so that the Congress can have the kind of direction that we hope that vote will bring.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. MURKOWSKI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. In view of my colleagues who have waited longer than I have, I simply wish to identify the time on either side, and if I may, if there is no objection, I would like to control the time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority has 20 minutes; the minority has 13 minutes.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I would be happy to—obviously, I will not speak for the minority—but I would yield whatever time to the minority or perhaps Senator TORRICELLI would like to control the time for the minority.

Mr. GRAHAM addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR.

Mr. GRAHAM. I ask unanimous consent that Della Lasanta, Luis Rivera, and Danielle Quintana of my staff and Susan Nisal of Senator D'AMATO's staff be accorded floor privileges for the remainder of today's session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. TORRICELLI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Jersey, Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. President, is there a unanimous consent request proposed by the Senator from Alaska?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If the Senator would withhold for a moment, 10 minutes of the minority's time is already under the control of Senator SARBAES under a previous order.

Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to control the remainder of minority time and the Senator from Alaska control the remainder of the majority time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. How much time does the Senator from New York desire?

Mr. D'AMATO. No more than 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. D'AMATO. Mr. President, let me at the outset say how tremendously proud and pleased I am that one of my great and dear friends, the Senator from Alaska, has worked so hard and so diligently to attempt to advance a cause that this Nation espouses to so many in 1993.

We talk about the lack of freedom throughout the world. We talk about democracy. Indeed, it is unfortunate that there are strong forces, people who I know and who I respect, who even at this very time give lip service rather than meaningful and true support for that cause. Senator MURKOWSKI understands that freedom and democracy are not something that just should be for some, but should be for all, and that the right of self-determination is an inalienable God-given right. It is one that this country is founded on. People have given the greatest price and sacrifice with their life, jeopardizing their families, in the fight for freedom and democracy.

I have to tell Members that it is morally imperative that it is a moral necessity that we strongly encourage the process of self-determination for 4 million Americans, U.S. citizens who live in Puerto Rico, that they should determine by what rules and what form of government they should live.

We have for years talked about the lack of democracy in all areas of the world. We talk about it in China, Korea, here, there. We should be ashamed that it has taken us so long to come forth with a rather simple resolution, and that it has taken such an incredible effort by the Senators from Alaska and others, to bring us to this point. This is a pittance in comparison to those who have bled, who have sacrificed for democracy, for self-determination under the control of the minority.
to recognize your hopes and your aspirations and your dreams. It is my hope that the people vote for statehood. But that is their right. They may determine that they want to continue the present situation, but they shouldn't have that inalienable right, and we should say to them that we are ready and willing to recognize your choice, your decision, as free men and women, and, yes, that they're willing and ready to undertake supporting that decision because we respect the inalienable rights of people to make their own determination.

As we mark the 100th anniversary of Puerto Rico becoming a part of the United States, I think it is important to recognize that their sons and daughters have made the supreme sacrifice. They have answered the call of duty. They have been there. And now it is time for us to say: You can be a part of this great Nation, not just as citizens, but as we want you and they'll do this. We'll determine, and then send your responses to us.

There are those who say it doesn't matter, Well, it does matter, and it is bigger than politics. It is bigger than Republicans and Democrats. I believe that in the fullness of time what an incredible beacon a 51st State might be. But that is for the people of Puerto Rico to determine. What an example to all of Central America and South America, in terms of sharing our cultures, our values, with this island as part of this great Nation. Certainly at the very least, the people of Puerto Rico, our citizens, should have that right which we declare day in and day out is inalienable for people throughout the country, for all corners of the world.

I congratulate my friends who have brought it to this point, and the Senate majority leader, Senator Tорricelli, for his unwavering support of that commitment to justice, to democracy, to self-determination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT PRO Tempore. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. TORRICElLI. Mr. President, I want to first express my congratulations to Senator MURKOWSKI without whose efforts in committee we would not, today, be discussing this resolution; Senator GRAHAM of Florida, who has labored for so long on this cause; Senator DASCHEL; Senator LANDRIEU; Senator D’AMATO; Senator CRAIG; so many Members of this institution who have taken the cause and interests of the people of Puerto Rico and made them their own.

There are few more solemn responsibilities to come to the Congress of the United States than the issue of admission into this great Union. It is solemn because this Union is indivisible. It is permanent. The judgment to join this Union is made by any peoples and any lands but once in their history, and it is never revisited again.

For 100 years, the people of Puerto Rico and their ancestors have shared a common history. Our people have fought together, bled together, and died together. Our cultures over a period of time increasingly have melded, became integrated. Indeed, in millions of people of Puerto Rico have chosen to live among other Americans in these United States. Indeed, the judgment that potentially might be made by the people of Puerto Rico who reside on the island has economically and culturally and even politically already been made by millions of others in how they live and where they choose to live.

The history of the United States for these 200 years has been a history of constant enfranchisement, expanding the right to vote to African-Americans, including those of Puerto Rican descent, in our own generation to the people of Hawaii and Alaska.

It is part of the great history of this country that we, unlike other nations, were not satisfied to simply enfranchise ourselves but recognized we were the greater and the better people through our expansion. Now we, potentially, vulturally, are in a judgment that can only be made by the people of Puerto Rico for themselves. This is ultimately their responsibility to decide. But it is the responsibility of all of us as Congress to make sure they have the right to decide. It is a peculiar and tragic irony of history that the first republic to be created out of colonialism might now enter the 21st century in a neocolonialist position.

No American should be content with this contradiction of our own history, and some might claim—some might even accuse—that this Union’s government is in a position with the people of Puerto Rico that is anything less than full, free, fair, and democratic. Yet, by the definition we have applied for ourselves, it is our duty to defend against the charge. Written on the walls of this Capitol from the inaugural address of President Harrison in 1841 is, “The only legitimate right to government is an expressed grant of power from the governed.”

Yet, Mr. President, every day, the people of Puerto Rico are subjected to taxes, rules, regulations, policies, and determinations from this Congress, having no representative who has a right to vote and make a judgment on their behalf. The relationship between the people of Puerto Rico and the people of the United States is a contradiction with everything that we hold dear and every principle upon which this country was founded.

Mr. President, I urge the people of Puerto Rico to take this judgment seriously between this date and December 13 and to think carefully. If they decide to join this union, there is a danger that they will not visit again. Joining this Union is permanent. If it were my judgment, I, like the Senator from New York, Senator D’AMATO, would choose to join the Union. I believe history has given us the right and the responsibility to face the future together. But I recognize mine is no more than a casual opinion. The decision rests with the people of Puerto Rico alone. The importance of this resolution is that as the people of Puerto Rico decide, indeed, we should recognize that the U.S. Congress considers Puerto Rico to genuinely be the unfinished business of American democracy.

The people of Puerto Rico should recognize as they vote that the Congress of the United States is watching, that we recognize our responsibilities and are prepared in the 106th Congress to receive their judgment and make our own decision about the future of this Union.

Mr. President, once again, I want to congratulate Senator MURKOWSKI for this resolution. I was privileged, over these months, and Senator GRAHAM for his leadership, and each of my colleagues who have come to this floor on a bipartisan and ideological line, uniting in our common belief that there is no right to govern without the consent of the governed and that it is not good enough, in spite of the enfranchisement of all of our people across this continent, that there remains a single exception. America is too good a land, our history is too great, for anyone to be an exception to these great and lasting principles.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, it is my understanding that this side has about 15 minutes remaining.

The PRESIDENT OFFICER. Yes, 15 minutes.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I yield 5 minutes to Senator DOMENICI from New Mexico.

The PRESIDENT OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, first, let me say that it is most appropriate that we take this action tonight during the second week of Hispanic Heritage Month in the United States. It is quite appropriate, while we are honoring the contribution which Hispanic culture has made to our country, that we are now saying to one group of Hispanics who live on the island of Puerto Rico that we are willing to see you take a vote regarding whether or not you would choose to become the next State.

Mr. President, this resolution affirms that the first step in any change of political status for the community of Puerto Rico rests with the people of that island. When that opinion in December—December of this year—then it will be up to Congress to take whatever steps are necessary to consider that decision.

Let me say that there are a number of Senate heroes with reference to this Puerto Rico resolution. First, I must say that the individuals most likely to recognize the difficulties of ultimate and decisive whether to become a State are the citizens represented by
those Senators whose States were last admitted, or close to being last admitted. So the hero tonight is FRANK MURKOWSKI of the great state of Alaska. For anybody wondering, that is not a Hispanic name—MURKOWSKI is a name of European descent, perhaps Polish. He understands what it is for a State to go through this process of deciding whether you are going to become a part of the Union, the United States of America.

I remind the Puerto Ricans—who are Americans in their own right—that America thinks that the United States is so important that we had a Civil War over whether you could unilaterally drop out of the Union once you joined it. So I want you to take it seriously, Puerto Rico, because it is serious. We had the biggest battle within the borders of our own Nation about the issue of keeping this great country together, and you should know that and you should be concerned about that.

Secondly, let me suggest that in the State of New York there is a Senator named Senator DOMENICI, and that to me it is a Spanish name either; it is Italian like mine, DOMENICI. But this Senator from New York understands what the Puerto Ricans in his State and the Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico mean to our Nation. He has always been willing to give the people in Puerto Rico an opportunity to determine their destiny. And I compliment Senator MURKOWSKI on our side of the aisle, behind the scenes, Senator D'AMATO has made it very clear that this night should occur—not next year or the year after, but now. So I compliment my good friend and a friend of the Puerto Rican people in New York and across the country. I compliment the Senator for his tremendous, tremendous regard for what Puerto Rico believes is right and fair.

I must say, from the other side of the aisle, it is most interesting that tonight, members of the Senate—these strange names—MURKOWSKI on our side, D'AMATO on our side, DOMENICI speaking, and TORRICELLI from New Jersey. I compliment Senator TORRICELLI for his vigilant and absolute persistence that something should be done on this issue before we leave here.

So tonight, without any question, the Puerto Rican people can already say across the island and throughout the rest of America, because it is a foregone conclusion, that the Senate will vote on this resolution proposed by the Senator from Alaska, Senator MURKOWSKI. Frankly, it will pass overwhelmingly. There will be no dissenting votes tonight, because for those who would like to dissent, they have already decided that they are not going to make a point of it.

As a consequence, we are going to approve this in just as formidable a way as if we had voted when the U.S. Senate says without a dissenting vote tonight, that we agree with this resolution.

Mr. President, once again, many of us came here from around the world, or our parents or grandparents did. And we know the validity and the great value of America. We hope the people in Puerto Rico understand that and act accordingly.

I yield the floor.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I believe Senator HATCH would like recognition for 3 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah is recognized for 3 minutes.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I have been to Puerto Rico. I have to say it is a beautiful land.

These are our fellow citizens. They have to make this determination. Of course, we should give them that right.

I have heard both arguments within Puerto Rico. Senator D'AMATO represents a great idea to have statehood. Others don't think it is quite so great. There are disadvantages to becoming a State. There is no question about it. But there are benefits, too, in the long run.

All we are doing here this evening is acknowledging as Members of the U.S. Senate the right of our fellow U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico to express democratically their views regarding their future political status through a referendum or other public forum, and to communicate those views to the President of the United States and to the Congress.

That is the least we could do. These are good people. These are people who have contributed to this country—and who will contribute to this country—even though their status has been different from other citizens.

I personally endorse and support this resolution here this evening. I hope and I know that it will pass. It will pass unanimously, which I think is the high tribute to the people of Puerto Rico and to those on both sides of this issue down there well.

I congratulate all of those who have worked so hard to get this done, especially Senator MURKOWSKI, Senator DOMENICI, the others who have been mentioned, Senator D'AMATO and Senator DOMENICI.

This is a wonderful evening, a wonderful day, and something that is long overdue. I congratulate my colleagues for having sponsored this today. I yield the floor.

Mr. MURKOWSKI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, first of all, in the concluding minutes that we have before our vote, let me recognize from the House of Representatives our good friend, CARLOS ROMERO-BARCELO, who is with us watching this historic action of the U.S. Senate. It is a pleasure to have you with us, my friend. Your contribution to these moments have been immeasurable, and your people of Puerto Rico can be very proud of your contribution in bringing this matter from the House of Representatives to the floor of the U.S. Senate tonight.

Mr. President, let me acknowledge my good friends and colleagues who have had such a significant role in moving this to where we are today. Of course, that would include Senator TORRICELLI and Senator D'AMATO.

I think it is important to recognize the constituency associated with many of the Members who have come forth as initial sponsors: Senator LAUTENBERG referred to Senator HATCH; my good friend from Hawaii, Senator AKAKA; Senator DASCHELLE; Senator LANDRIEU; Senator LIEBERMAN; Senator GRAHAM of Florida; and Senator DOMENICI, and there are many, many more.

But the significance of the commitment, particularly of Senator D'AMATO and Senator TORRICELLI, represents an extraordinary sensitivity as brought out in the statements not necessarily individually of their feeling towards what America is all about but the commitment that was made by the Senator from New Mexico, Senator DOMENICI, who indicated, as you look at the names of sponsors on this legislation, that you have a patron who, if you will, of the mixture of Americans committed to democracy.

I must acknowledge in my thanks to my colleagues that this Senator from Alaska does not have a Puerto Rican constituency. But I do have a long memory.

Alaska has been a State since 1959. I grew up in a territory. We had taxation without representation. My father used to say he felt good about being able to write on his income tax form in a red pen "filed under protest, taxation without representation." But he knew the extent of what made him feel good.

I can recall seeing neighbors when I was too young to go into the draft being drafted. We were second-class citizens. Mr. President, we had special identification cards to leave the territory of Alaska to visit the State of Washington. It was quite a blow to the sensitivity of American citizens, and as a consequence we have a situation with regard to Puerto Rico today.

Mr. President, I would like to have the clerk reserve at least 2 minutes of my time remaining for one of my colleagues who is here with me.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 4 minutes 30 seconds remaining.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, if I may, I want to specifically cite the fact that I support this resolution. I fully support the objective of this resolution in reaffirming the right of our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico to express their desires on political status through popular referenda and communicate those desires to the federal government. I also agree the Congress of the United States should carefully review and consider any such communication.
This resolution is fully consistent with the objective of the draft chairman's mark that I circulated immediately prior to the recess.

I want to thank my colleagues who reviewed the draft chairman's mark and who provided me with comments and suggestions. As I stated in my press release last week, I do not think that there will be time to fully consider this legislation this session, but I think we have made considerable progress. This resolution is fully consistent with the philosophy of my draft that the initiative for any political status change lies exclusively with Puerto Rico.

During this Congress, the House of Representatives has passed legislation requiring a referendum in Puerto Rico. Similar legislation was introduced in the Senate. I stated at the outset of this Congress, that I consider the matter of political status one of the most important constitutional responsibilities of the Congress and of my committee.

I cautioned when those measures were introduced that as much as some who support these measures suggest that this legislation enacted in this centennial year of Puerto Rican coming under United States sovereignty, this was an extraordinarily complex and important issue and deserved the full and fair consideration be-cause I recall what happened in my own State of Alaska. It took a long time. Although the committee conducted a series of meetings in Puerto Rico at the beginning of the Congress, I made the decision that we would wait for the House to pass legislation before we began the formal committee process. I made that decision so that our committee would have all the various proposals before us.

By the time the House passed its legislation, it was already clear that it would be very difficult to resolve the many questions presented by the legislation this year. I want to emphasize the words "this year," because I think there has been too much emphasis on timing and not enough on substance.

I am committed to the enactment of responsible legislation and not simply to the enactment of legislation this year.

Nonetheless, and despite the limitations of the Senate schedule and the importance of the other measures pending before the committee, we held a series of workshops, oversight hearings, and legislative hearings. I circulated a draft chairman's mark prior to the August recess to my colleagues on the committee. I asked for a review and comments. Several Members submitted very thoughtful amendments to the draft chairman's mark. While I have directed the staff to continue to work on these amendments, I do not see that attempting to force the legislative process would either be wise or helpful in view of the remaining time left in this session.

The position heard from the Governor and the leadership of the three recognized political parties in Puerto Rico. The Governor expressed the desire of the government of Puerto Rico to obtain an expression from the federal government of status alternatives. The parties agreed that as long as each political party is able to craft its own definition, those definitions would be political statements and as a result, no referenda or vote on the clarity that Congress would want.

The first oversight hearing considered the fiscal and economic implications of the issues involved in any transition to prepare Puerto Rico for either consideration of an Admissions Act or for the withdrawal of United States sovereignty.

The second oversight hearing focused on the individual issues involved in separate sovereignty, either as full members of the United States or in some form of free association. In addition to a consideration of the issues, especially that of citizenship, the hearings also served to focus on sovereignty as the test for consideration of any change in status. Those proceedings shed considerable light on some of the difficulties involved in any transition to prepare Puerto Rico for either consideration of an Admissions Act or for the withdrawal of United States sovereignty.

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September 17, 1998

Mr. AUTENBERG. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of this resolution. I am pleased that we are passing this resolution on the second day of Hispanic Heritage Month because Puerto Ricans, like all Hispanic Americans, have made a great contribution to the culture and economic growth of America.

There are nearly 4,000,000 American Citizens who live in the Islands of Puerto Rico. They are an integral part of our nation, they pay taxes and serve and die in our nation's military. Furthermore, there are millions of American Citizens with Puerto Rican heritage who live on the continent, hundreds of thousands of whom live in New Jersey. In many ways, New Jersey is a second home for Puerto Ricans.

I strongly believe that the American citizens who live in Puerto Rico should have the right to a democratic vote to determine the future status of these islands. I am pleased that such a referendum will take place on December 11. After this vote, Congress should take the appropriate legislative action that reflects the will of the American citizens living in Puerto Rico. And I will work with my colleagues to make sure that this happens.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks recognition?

Mr. MUKROWSKI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. MUKROWSKI. I see no other Senator wishing to speak.

I believe there is no more remaining time on our side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska controls 2 minutes; the Senator from New Jersey controls 1 minute 45 seconds.

Mr. TORRICEILLO. Mr. President, I yield back my time.

Mr. MUKROWSKI. Mr. President, I would be very pleased, if there is no other Senator wishing recognition, to yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the resolution and the preamble are agreed to.

The resolution (S. Res. 279), with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. Res. 279

Whereas nearly 4,000,000 United States citizens live in the Islands of Puerto Rico.

Whereas 1998 marks the centenary of the acquisition of the Islands of Puerto Rico from Spain.

Whereas in 1917 the United States granted United States citizenship to the inhabitants of Puerto Rico.

Whereas since 1952, Puerto Rico has exercised local self-government under the sovereignty of the United States subject to the provisions of the Constitution of the United States and other Federal laws applicable to Puerto Rico.

Whereas the Senate supports and recognizes the rights of United States citizens residing in Puerto Rico to express their views regarding their future political status.

Whereas the political status of Puerto Rico can be determined only by the Congress of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

The first resolution dealing with Alaska was introduced in the Congress in 1913. Final action on statehood for Alaska took place in 1958. We became a State in 1959, as Senator MUKROWSKI said. It is a long process to seek to change the political status of a portion of the United States, and Puerto Rico is a portion of our country. Its people really deserve the opportunity to express themselves on what their future should be.

So my congratulations to everyone who worked on this resolution forward. I hope the day will come when we are still in the Senate that we can vote on statehood for Puerto Rico.

Mr. TORRICEILLO addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. TORRICEILLO. How much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey controls 4 minutes 40 seconds.

Mr. TORRICEILLO, Mr. President, let me finally, in conclusion, also thank CARLOS ROMERO-BARCELÓ. The fact that Senator Román has come together in this extraordinary judgment would not have been possible without his leadership. And also, as Senator MUKROWSKI said, Governor Pedro Rossello has been such an important person in building this very broad coalition. To the Governor, I offer my very sincere congratulations. He is an extraordinary man who has given great service to his people in making this night possible. CARLOS ROMERO-BARCELÓ, your service has been nonetheless a great credit to the people of Puerto Rico.

Mr. President, I yield the remainder of my time to the Senator from Connecticut, Mr. LIEBERMAN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut is recognized for 4 minutes.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I thank the Chair. I thank my friend from New Jersey particularly for his leadership in bringing this resolution forward and to express my own pleasure at being a co-sponsor along with a bipartisan group of cosponsors.

Mr. President, very briefly, this resolution is about principle. It is not about politics. It is about the principle of self-determination, which was at the heart of the creation of America—the principle of self-determination, democracy, self-rule. It has continued throughout our history to today, when it remains a fundamental priority element of our foreign policy toward other peoples and other nations.

Really, what this is about is taking that fundamental American principle which we apply around the world and applying it to 4 million of our fellow American citizens who live on the islands that constitute Puerto Rico, who are defending and upholding America's freedom in disproportionate numbers. They deserve the right to become fully free, determine their destiny, participate fully, if they choose and how they choose, in our democracy.

Senator MUKROWSKI has been a very steadfast leader in this effort. It didn't get as far as he or we wanted, but this resolution at least gives us the possibility, before the 105th session adjourns and prior to the referendum that will be held in Puerto Rico in December, to say as Members of the Senate of both parties that we exercise and recognize the right of our 4 million fellow Americans in Puerto Rico to express themselves to us and that we will review any communication that results from the vote that they hold in December. It is the least we can do to be true to our principles.

I thank the Chair and I yield the floor.