

PUERTO RICO STATUS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

H.R. 856

A BILL TO PROVIDE A PROCESS LEADING TO FULL SELF-
GOVERNMENT FOR PUERTO RICO

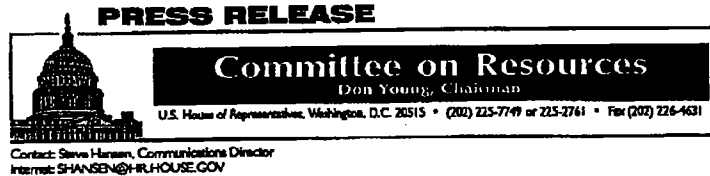
MARCH 19, 1997—WASHINGTON, DC

Serial No. 105-16

Printed for the use of the Committee on Resources



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 1997



To: *National Desk/International Affairs Reporter*
March 3, 1997

**Puerto Rico's Party Leaders Asked To Submit
Political Status Definition Language To Congress;
*Commonwealth, Independence & Statehood Parties Officially Contacted By Congress***

Washington, D.C. - The leaders of Puerto Rico's three political parties were officially requested today to submit legislative language for their political status options which will be considered during future committee deliberations of the bi-partisan "United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act" (H.R. 856).

U.S. Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska), the prime sponsor of the H.R. 856, and U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), a co-sponsor of the legislation requested the political status definitions in letters to the party leaders (See Page 2).

Young is the Chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Resources, which has jurisdiction over territorial issues, and Miller is the Committee's Ranking Democrat Member.

Young and Miller requested that the party leaders submit their status definitions by March 31, 1997.

The letters were sent to:

- * Puerto Rico Governor, Dr. Pedro Rosselló, the President of the New Progressive Party
- * Puerto Rico Senator Ruben Berrios-Martinez, President of the Puerto Rican Independence Party
- * Mr. Anibal Acevedo Vilá, President of the Popular Democratic Party

Legislation Seeks Resolution To 100-Year-Old Issue

Last week, Young's bi-partisan legislation which will begin the process for a final decision on the political status of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, was introduced in the U.S. House. "The United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act" will allow the people of Puerto Rico to decide the future of their island among 1) Commonwealth, 2) Separate Sovereignty, or 3) Statehood.

Young said that under the U.S. Constitution and applicable principles of international law, the

recognized options for full self-government in H.R. 856 are:

- 1) Independence;
- 2) Separate sovereignty in free association with the United States; and
- 3) Full integration into the United States leading to statehood.

Text Of Letter To Puerto Rico's Leaders

The following is the text of the letter which was sent to the respective party leaders:

On February 27, 1997, the "United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act" was introduced in the House of Representatives, the text being identical to H.R. 4281, as introduced on September 28, 1996. During the next several weeks, the House Committee on Resources will hold hearings to solicit comments and testimony on the provisions of the bill from interested parties.

A critical aspect of this legislation are the definitions of the status options to be placed on the ballot and Congress is ultimately responsible for crafting the definition which will be contained in the bill. There is no purpose in presenting to the people of Puerto Rico a status definition which does not represent an option that the Congress will be willing to ratify should it be approved in a plebiscite.

As the president of one of the three major political parties in Puerto Rico, we request that you submit to the Committee on Resources the definition which you believe would be most appropriate for the status option you support. We assure you that your specific definition regarding your status preference will be presented to all of the Committee Members for consideration at the time of mark-up, and will include a vote by the Committee if that is your desire. In order for the Committee deliberations to proceed in a timely manner, all definitions must be received by the Committee by Monday, March 31, 1997.

During this same period, the three political parties will be invited to appear before the Committee at the first hearing of the Committee in Washington, on March 19, 1997, to present their views on all sections of the bill, including the various procedural and operational aspects of the proposed referendum and status preference. However, as stated above, your specific legislative status definition for the subsequent markup may be submitted up to the end of March.

You will receive a separate letter regarding the hearing and the submission of a statement. As also announced, subsequent hearings in San Juan and Mayaguez in April will permit others in Puerto Rico to express their views regarding their preferred relationship with the United States.

If you have any questions regarding this invitation, please do not hesitate to contact us personally or T.E. Manase Mansur of the Majority staff at (202) 226-7400 or Marie Howard Fabrizio of the Democratic staff at (202) 226-2311. We look forward to your participation and to enactment of a fair and definitive bill concerning Puerto Rico's future status this year.

Sincerely,

DON YOUNG
Chairman

GEORGE MILLER
Senior Democratic Member

Three Hearings Already Scheduled

Young said Congressional hearings are proceeding toward the following dates:

- * March 19th in Washington, D.C.
- * April 19th in San Juan, Puerto Rico
- * April 21st in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico

Among the 60 co-sponsors of Young's legislation are:

- * *House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA)*
- * *Puerto Rico's Democrat Resident Commissioner Carlos Romero-Barceló*
- * *Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-TX)*
- * *Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-NY), Chairman, International Relations Committee*
- * *Rep. Elton Gallegly (R-CA), Chairman, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere*
- * *Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN), Chairman, Government Reform and Oversight*
- * *Rep. John Lewis (D-GA), Chief Deputy Democrat Whip*
- * *Rep. George Miller (D-CA), Ranking Democrat, House Resources Committee*
- * *Rep. José E. Serrano (D-NY)*
- * *Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI)*

For more information, please check the House Committee on Resources Home Page at <http://www.house.gov/resources/>

###