

National Governors' Association Policy EC-2. POLITICAL SELF-DETERMINATION FOR PUERTO RICO

The people of Puerto Rico, as natural-born citizens of the United States, possess the same individual liberties as do all other American citizens, including the right to protect and nurture their local culture and linguistic heritage, and to conduct their affairs in accordance with a local constitution compatible with and subordinate to the U.S. Constitution. Most Governors represent constituencies that include American citizens of Puerto Rican descent. Tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans have served our nation with distinction in every United States military conflict of this century, earning numerous decorations, including four posthumous medals of honor, and rising in several instances to the ranks of general and admiral. Without admission to the Union, the residents of Puerto Rico sustained many combat casualties defending United States interests in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf. Athletes, scholars, artists, entrepreneurs, professionals, and laborers of Puerto Rican origin have been contributing throughout this century to the spiritual and socio-economic enrichment of the United States.

It is essential that the final, permanent political status of Puerto Rico be democratically selected by the American citizens who reside there on options ranging from U.S. statehood to sovereign independence.

An absolute majority of Puerto Rico's voters supported a platform seeking Congressional sponsorship of a political status plebiscite for Puerto Rico. Responsibility for making "all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States" is vested in the United States Congress by Article IV, Section 3 of the U.S. Constitution.

Therefore, in harmony with its long-standing acknowledgment of the importance of self-determination by the people of Puerto Rico as to the status of Puerto Rico, the National Governors' Association urges the 105th United States Congress to enact legislation that will - no later than the 1998 centennial of the United States sovereignty over Puerto Rico - provide a mechanism for political self-determination by the American citizens who reside in Puerto Rico.

Time limited (effective Winter Meeting 1997, Winter Meeting 1999).

Adopted Annual Meeting 1973, revised Winter Meeting 1989; revised and reaffirmed Winter Meeting 1993; reaffirmed Winter Meeting 1995 (Formerly Policy A-6), revised and reaffirmed Winter Meeting 1997.