

Vietnam Veterans of America
SELF-DETERMINATION FOR PUERTO RICO
Resolution MA-10-03

Issue:

The United States Constitution promises equal protection under the law to all U.S. citizens, and yet the island's current political status treats veterans of Puerto Rico and their families differently than citizens residing in the fifty states of the Union, reminiscent of the "separate but equal" standard of a past era which, although eventually overturned, causes our society to continue to struggle with its repercussions.

Background:

On May 3, 1917, Puerto Ricans embarked on a mission in defense of the nation during WWI by protecting the Panama Canal Zone; and during WWII, Puerto Rico's 65th Infantry Regiment was decorated for its participation in the Naples-Foggian, Rome-Arno, Central Europe, and Rhineland campaigns; and during the Korea Conflict, more than 800 Puerto Ricans made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the universal right of self-determination; and during the Vietnam War, more than 500 Puerto Ricans gave their lives for the nation. There exists an ever-growing consensus among American veterans and leading veterans organizations, such as the American GI Forum, that the time has come to empower Puerto Rican men and women who have served with courage and distinction in the armed forces of the United States and their families to make a decision regarding their island's ultimate destiny.

Resolved, That:

Vietnam Veterans of America, at the National Convention in St. Louis, MO, July 29 to August 3, 2003, supports legislation whereby the United States Congress would define the legal status options available to the approximately 200,000 Puerto Rican veterans who have served in the United States military and their families and authorize a plebiscite to provide an opportunity for the veterans of Puerto Rico and their families to make an informed decision regarding the island's future.

Adopted August 2, 2003