

*Senator Martin Heinrich*  
*Puerto Rican Journey for Equality*  
*November 19, 2013*  
*Time: 11am*

As Congressman Serrano said “No Como Más.”

I want to thank Igualdad for putting this together today and for keeping this alive.

You know last year, as you heard over and over 54% of Puerto Ricans rejected their current form of government, and for anyone who ascribes to take seriously self-determination for democracy now requires a response.

I believe that Congress has a responsibility to respond to that referendum.

We cannot govern Puerto Rico without its consent.

In my home state of New Mexico, we spent 66 years as a territory – longer than any state in the nation today.

But as all of you know, Puerto Rico has spent 123 years as an American territory. That’s long enough.

Now we have all heard some of the arguments about admitting a bilingual state, but when my home state of New Mexico was admitted to the union in 1912, half of our population, our residents, spoke Spanish as their primary language, and I can tell you that in any given day, in New Mexico today, whether you are at the Post Office or the Halls of Government or the coffee shop, that hasn’t changed.

You hear Spanish in the streets and in the Halls of Government.

Today, New Mexico doesn’t have an official language and government documents are printed in both English and Spanish, including election ballots.

And I can tell you that New Mexicans are no less American for it.

Look at our volunteerism in any conflict that this Country has ever seen. New Mexico has some of the highest rates of volunteerism in the Nation.

So, the debate over Puerto Rico’s status needs to be settled once and for all so that its people can focus on their prosperity.

It is time for Puerto Rico to have a democratically legitimate form of government.

The time to act is now and I look forward to working with you and standing with you.

Thank you so much.