

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Sessions  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Attorney General  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Mr. Attorney General:


We write to you in opposition to the expenditure plan, plebiscite ballot, and educational materials submitted by the Puerto Rico State Elections Commission. The language of the ballot does not comply with the Constitution, laws, and policies of the United States.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2014 (Public Law 113-76) included \$2.5 million within the Byrne Justice Assistance Program “for objective, nonpartisan voter education about, and a plebiscite on, options that would resolve Puerto Rico's future political status.” Per the language of the act, the funds cannot be obligated until the Department of Justice makes a “finding that the voter education materials, plebiscite ballot, and related materials are not incompatible with the Constitution and laws and policies of the United States.” The ballot put forward by the pro-statehood government in Puerto Rico excludes Commonwealth, a viable option. This exclusion leaves the ballot inherently unfair, undemocratic, and misleading.

The ballot’s exclusion of Commonwealth status, which has been supported by hundreds of thousands of Puerto Rican voters in the past, effectively disenfranchises these voters. It has been the United States’ policy to recognize the people of Puerto Rico’s right to self-determination in a fair, inclusive, and transparent way. True self-determination requires the freedom to choose among all valid status options.

We strongly request that your department review the ballot submitted by the Puerto Rico State Elections Commission. We believe you will find it does not comply with the requirements set forth in the Consolidated Appropriations Act.

Sincerely,

  
United States Senator

  
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