congressionnal record — house

(R.M. Rangel asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. Rangel. Let me thank the Chair from New York for allowing me this time and let me share the great respect and admiration that I have for the gentleman from Puerto Rico, a hardworking man. There is no question in my mind that in his heart, he wants what is best for Puerto Rico and what is best for the United States of America. And I can say the same about his predecessor who has now moved on to become the Governor.

The only question that I have—since I have been a friend of Puerto Rico for 39 years, not just legislatively but in my heart. I have felt the unfairness it is to call people citizens and yet have to have a mandate. We’re not going to have a divided territory become a State. That was a guy who told me that from his background in history that he was an expert on this. This is a hard question, one that didn’t need the approval of the United States Congress to do it; they don’t need it today. But it is a manipulation of the process to try to get a desired outcome.

If you want to vote on statehood, take a straight vote. Do the people of Puerto Rico want the people of Puerto Rico want statehood? Simple, straightforward, to the point, let’s understand if that is truly what they want.

I am a conservative person, I do not believe that I should be trying to manipulate what is happening in Puerto Rico and what they want.

Finally, I will end with this. Please, as you consider this bill, understand that you are empowering people to vote in this election that have no business voting in this election. If you were born in Puerto Rico, you lived there 2 months and then suddenly you moved to the mainland. So you’ve lived here for the last 30, 40 years, you get to vote in this election. Why should a resident of Utah or Indiana vote in an election in Puerto Rico? That is fundamentally wrong and it is there because they want to manipulate the end result.

This is about Puerto Rico and the vote should be taken in Puerto Rico by the people of Puerto Rico if the people of Puerto Rico choose to do so, and not because of the heavy hand of the United States Congress. I urge my colleagues to vote "no."

Ms. Velázquez. Mr. Chair, I yield 10 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Gutiérrez).

Mr. Gutiérrez. I thank the gentlelady.

Look, this is the Puerto Rico State bill. It is the only result you can possibly expect. The deck is stacked. Why do you vote? What would you do differently? What would you do if you were on the other side, and you knew what they keep saying to me: Why are you against statehood? Everywhere I go: Why are you against statehood? They don’t say: Why are you against the people of Puerto Rico having a free vote in determining their future and in exercising their right to self-determination.

Why do we come here and try to like hoodwink one another, fool one another. I mean, you know what I would like to see on the House floor; the same depth of honesty, sincerity and clarity and transparency that exists when people come up to me and ask why I am against statehood for Puerto Rico.

That is not why I am up here. I am against a process that does not allow the people of Puerto Rico to exercise their sovereign right to determine their future in a free manner.

Now, what does that mean? Everybody says well, there are 4 million American citizens in Puerto Rico. Have you ever considered one thing, that the