

The CHAIR. The gentlewoman from New York has 7½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Puerto Rico has 6¼ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Washington State has 8½ minutes remaining.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PIERLUISI. I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands.

Mr. SABLÁN. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 2499.

As the newest member of the American family just 35 years ago, on a plebiscite called an act of free political self-determination, we went to the ballot and had one choice only—Commonwealth.

For us to say that Congress can give Puerto Rico the options it has in H.R. 2499, because it appears as if it's only statehood, we do this all the time, Mr. Chairman. We're not doing it now. We go to war. We are trying to give people free will and freedom. Yet we tell them it is freedom in association with the United States. It took Puerto Rico 100 years of being part of the United States. Only in the past 12 years has this discussion started.

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It's about time. Let's put the question to the people of Puerto Rico. Give them an option. They could choose statehood; they could choose to remain a Commonwealth. Let's pass H.R. 2499. I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING).

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentleman from Washington for yielding and for leading on this issue.

Mr. Chairman, I want to just add to this discussion and deliberation that what really happens here is that if this should pass today, and I rise in opposition to H.R. 2499, Mr. Chairman, but it sets up a momentum, it sets up a level of expectations, and the sequence of events being the question that would go before Puerto Ricans and those who were born in Puerto Rico that would live in any of the other 50 States presumably, do you want to stay the same or do you want to change? And once that decision is made, then there is no going back.

The momentum then washes over the dam. And the next question that comes back is, now you can't be what you were before. Now you have to decide between being an independent country or a free association, whatever that might be, or statehood. And when we get to this question of statehood and I look at the standards that have been there in the past, I disagree with the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG). I can go up there and English is the language that is used in government and business and everywhere you go.

Yes, every language you can imagine is spoken of in every State, but the practice in Puerto Rico is Spanish, not

English. Eighty-five percent of Puerto Ricans will self-profess that they are not proficient in English. They have very little understanding of English.

In fact, I will introduce into the RECORD the Latin American Herald Tribune, dated April 26, where the Secretary of Education in Puerto Rico, the Governor's Secretary, said, English is taught in Puerto Rico as if it were a foreign language and 85 percent aren't proficient in it.

I will also introduce into the RECORD a letter from U.S. English, Incorporated. Among it is a statement I think that's very important to consider here in this body, which says: "No State has ever been allowed to come into the Union when its core organs of government operate in a foreign language, and Puerto Rico must not be an exception." And, Mr. Chairman, it points out that Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma had those conditions as conditions coming into statehood.

I just would make this point, that I wouldn't rise here today and take this position here today, since 1917 or even the last 50 years. If the practice of education and government in Puerto Rico had been the unifying common language, we would be unified as a people. Let's start that path and have this discussion in a generation.

Congressman DOC HASTINGS,  
*Ranking Member, House Natural Resources Committee, Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC.*

DEAR CONGRESSMAN HASTINGS: On behalf of 1.8 million members of U.S. English, we oppose the current version of H.R. 2499, the Puerto Rico Democracy Act. H.R. 2499 fails to address the serious language questions pertaining to Puerto Rico's status, and compounds this error by pretending to address these issues. This vote will be featured prominently in the legislative scorecard we distribute to our members.

As you are aware, Puerto Rico's current policies with respect to language have never been allowed for any incoming state.

While English is mandatory in Puerto Rico's public schools, it is taught as a foreign language, and instruction rarely exceeds one hour per day. Unsurprisingly, just 20 percent of Puerto Rico's residents speak English fluently. California has the lowest proficiency rate among the 50 states, and its rate is 80 percent.

Puerto Rico's local courts and legislature operate entirely in Spanish, with English translations available only upon request.

No state has ever been allowed to come into the Union when its core organs of government operate in a foreign language, and Puerto Rico must not be an exception.

Yesterday, the Rules Committee defeated amendments offered by Rep. Paul Broun that would have brought Puerto Rico's policies in line with the other 50 states as a condition for statehood. Instead, the committee reported an "alternative" English amendment by Rep. Dan Burton.

The Burton amendment, while purportedly offering a Puerto Rican state equal treatment, actually offers special treatment by allowing statehood with these historically unprecedented policies intact. Burton's insistence that Puerto Rico will be subject to federal official language policies is meaningless, since the United States has no official language. Further, Burton's "sense of Congress that English be promoted" has no legal force.

The Burton language is contrary to Congress' uniform historical practice when the language of government of a potential state was in genuine doubt. Congress required—not "promoted"—English to be the language of instruction for public schools in Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma as a condition for statehood.

I urge any member who cares about English's role in our national unity to oppose this version of the legislation.

Sincerely,

MAURO E. MUJICA,  
*Chairman of the Board, U.S. English, Inc.*

[From the Latin American Herald Tribune,  
Apr. 26, 2010]

#### PUERTO RICAN GOVERNMENT WANTS BILINGUAL NATION

SAN JUAN.—The Puerto Rican government wants to establish programs for teaching English to make the younger generations bilingual on an island where 85 percent of the population admits to having only a very basic idea of the language.

Education Secretary Odette Piñero said Tuesday in an interview with Efe that the department supports the initiative of Puerto Rico's resident commissioner in Washington, Pedro Pierluisi, to ask for more federal funding for teaching English in the public schools of this U.S. commonwealth.

"Spanish and English are the official languages of Puerto Rico, that is established," Piñero said, adding that the point of the proposal is to give public school students on the island the same opportunities as those who go to private schools.

Piñero also said that the measure will make sure that when young people on the island finish their studies they will be able to perform correctly both in Spanish and in English, which she said was something Puerto Rican society was asking for.

She was referring to an initiative announced by Pierluisi to ask that Title III funds be quadrupled for Puerto Rico, which would bring to \$14 million per year the amount the Caribbean island would get for that purpose.

Piñero said that preceding administrations lost their chance to access those funds by not presenting the corresponding application the right way.

The secretary said that the measure "will improve employment opportunities" for the Caribbean island's young people, after commenting that "English is taught in Puerto Rico as if it were a foreign language."

"The idea is to give the necessary resources to kids in public schools so they have the same opportunities," she said.

For her part, the director of the Linguistics Program at the University of Puerto Rico, Yolanda Rivera, told Efe she is in favor of free choice in learning languages.

Rivera said, nonetheless, that "English is a foreign language in Puerto Rico," and there are political criteria for making that language more prevalent here as sought by the administration of Gov. Luis Fortuño, whose party favors U.S. statehood for the island.

"Deciding which language to teach is based on political criteria," Rivera said, adding that if commercial interests were the most important thing, Chinese would be the ideal language given the heights the Asian nation has reached internationally in that area.

The professor also said that she is concerned about Pierluisi's announcement of the hypothetical arrival of U.S. English teachers on the island.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished Republican whip, Mr. CANTOR.