

the advantages and responsibilities of being under the sovereignty of a bigger mother country. That process in which each of us finds ourselves at different levels of involvement must be respected, and I do not find that this bill does that.

I thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to make this opening statement and I look forward to hearing from the witnesses.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Christian-Christensen follows:]

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The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Saxton.

STATEMENT OF HON. JIM SAXTON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN  
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Mr. SAXTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for holding this hearing today. I have been a Member of Congress for 16 years and during that period of time I have served with the chairman on numerous committees. I know that the chairman cares very deeply about self-determination for the people of Puerto Rico.

I also want to thank my colleague, Mr. Doolittle, for introducing the bill at issue today. Like my colleague, Mr. Doolittle, I am not sure what Puerto Rico's ultimate political status should be, but I agree with him that we should consider and debate only those options that pass constitutional muster. In my opinion, this bill fails in that regard.

The proposal, which I understand was originally put forward by Puerto Rico's Commonwealth Party, seeks to create a quasi-nation within a nation. This new entity would have the authority to make all laws necessary for its own governance, regulate trade with foreign countries, and enter into treaties with other nations. On the other hand, the residents of this new entity would be U.S. citizens, use U.S. currency, and be protected from enemy attack by U.S. forces. If this entity sounds more like a State than a separate nation, consider that the citizens and businesses of this new entity would not have to pay U.S. income taxes.

Now, it seems to me that if something looks like a duck and it acts like a duck and it talks like a duck, we all know that it is probably a duck. But if something would look like a territory, act like a nation, and walk like a State, I think we know what it is, too. It is unconstitutional and legislatively unattainable.

The enhanced commonwealth plan appears to be nothing more than an attempt to gain political advantage by misleading the people of Puerto Rico into believing that they can have all the rights, privileges, and benefits they want without the duties, responsibilities, and obligations that go along with them. Congress is given the authority under the Constitution to make the needful rules and regulations governing territories.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today. I understand that the faction that devised the plan did not accept the committee's invitation to testify today. That is disappointing. Nevertheless, I look forward to hearing from the witnesses that are with us. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

If we may, we have witnesses waiting and I would suggest respectfully, unless you are from the territory, submit a statement. Mr. Pallone, is that all right with you or do you want to make a long statement?

Mr. PALLONE. I am sorry. You do not want us to do any more?

The CHAIRMAN. No, really. I mean, we have got witnesses here that have to go.

Mr. PALLONE. If everybody else agrees to that, I have no problem.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pallone follows:]

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The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Underwood, I would say, or my good friend from American Samoa, those two gentlemen have directly some real interest in this, and Mr. Doolittle, because you are the author of the bill, make it good and short. Mr. Doolittle?

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN T. DOOLITTLE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank you for agreeing to hold this hearing today. You have been tireless in your efforts to persuade Congress that it has a duty to help Puerto Rico achieve a permanent political status.

I have a somewhat lengthy statement, Mr. Chairman, which I will not be able to abbreviate, so I will say this to you. Many, you and Mr. Saxton and Governor Romero-Barcelo, have expressed thoughts that I agree with. I will just say this. I would vote against this bill myself, but I introduced it for the purpose of provoking this discussion and of getting finally a focus by the Congress on these issues, because I think it is absolutely critical that we identify what the acceptable alternatives are, and in my opinion, this proposal reflected in the bill, really, which is the PDP's proposal, is absurd and unconstitutional on its face and we need to hear today from the experts in constitutional law and in policy and have them give us their seasoned opinions on these issues because the people of Puerto Rico do have American citizenship. They are entitled, I think, to know what the truth actually is.

I am hopeful that out of this hearing today will come some positive momentum for resolving the political status of Puerto Rico. I will submit the rest of my statement, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman for being understanding.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Doolittle follows:]

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The CHAIRMAN. I also ask unanimous consent that the statement of Mr. George Miller be submitted for the record.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Miller follows:]

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The CHAIRMAN. I ask that the statement of Senator Larry Craig be submitted for the record.

[The prepared statement of Senator Craig follows:]

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The CHAIRMAN. I also ask that the statement of Representative Henry Bonilla be submitted for the record. Without objection, it is so ordered.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bonilla follows:]