

***** INSERT *****

The CHAIRMAN. At this time, we are honored to have the Honorable Dan Burton from the U.S. House of Representatives to be our first witness, and before you go ahead, Dan, I am moving Mr. Dick Thornburgh up on the first panel, coming right after Walter Dellinger. It will be five, and then the last two will be in the second panel.

Mr. Burton?

STATEMENT OF HON. DAN BURTON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF INDIANA

Mr. BURTON. Let me just say, Mr. Chairman, I have worked with you for a long time on the Puerto Rico issue. I admire your stand and your hard work and you are to be commended for holding this hearing. Mr. Doolittle, who is a good friend of mine, as well, I thank you for bringing this issue before the Congress and this committee because I think it is extremely important that the people of Puerto Rico, whom I love—I have been down there with the chairman a number of times and they are wonderful people—they deserve to know the facts about where they stand as far as this issue is concerned.

This bill seeks to emphasize the need to address and clarify the definitions of the status options that are available to the U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico. Up until now, the lack of a Congressionally-mandated plebiscite to decide once and for all the political status of Puerto Rico has resulted in a waste of time and money, as previous debates and referendums have unfortunately been filled by inaccurate and potentially unconstitutional definitions. These definitions have misled the Puerto Rican people into believing in something that is just not feasible.

An example of one such definition is the definition of enhanced commonwealth that we have before us today. In the past, this definition has been supported by the Popular Democratic Party, the Puerto Rican political party that promotes the status quo as the ultimate political relationship with the United States. Maybe the definition is the result of pure ignorance or maybe it is the brainchild of political opportunists seeking to confuse or complicate the issue. Regardless, it is our duty to clarify these statements that have misled millions of U.S. citizens and that have been perpetuated by the lack of Congressional action.

The fact that a political faction in Puerto Rico promotes this definition as feasible is an affront to the truth and to our shared democratic principles. I suspect that if the "enhanced commonwealth definition" was, in fact, constitutionally viable, the United States of America would not have 50 independent States, we would have 50 enhanced commonwealths rather than what we have today.

Not allowing American citizens to decide their fate in a Congressionally-mandated referendum is an injustice, not just to 3.9 million of our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico, but to all Americans in general. There is no doubt that the U.S. Congress has the sole authority to solve this century-long dilemma that continues to project us as colonial rulers in front of the entire world.

It is disturbing that over the past 101 years, Mr. Chairman, the U.S. Congress has considered a total of 92 bills regarding the sta-

tus of Puerto Rico and yet there has been no resolution to the ambiguous relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States.

I believe that the United States citizens of Puerto Rico have the right to choose to enjoy the full privileges and responsibilities that the rest of America's citizens are able to enjoy today, or in the alternative, they also can choose for themselves to establish a free and independent republic, a free country.

For that reason, I firmly believe that Congress should act now to give the people of Puerto Rico the ability to choose between the only real options for full sovereignty, statehood or independence. It is time that we take charge of our legal and moral obligations and enact legislation that will resolve Puerto Rico's political status by allowing them to decide their own future for themselves once and for all.

We have been debating this, Mr. Chairman, for a long time. You and I have worked on it for a long time. There has been so much confusion down there that we have seen time and again when we have been down there that it is really time to resolve this issue and there are only two choices, in my opinion, and I think you agree with that, and that is independence or statehood. I believe truly that the wonderful people of Puerto Rico, when faced with that decision, will undoubtedly vote once and for all to become the 51st State of the Union. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Burton. I can agree with what you have said and I suggest also you have been a leader in this for a long, long time. For those in the audience, I will not be chairman of this committee next year but I will be on the committee and I will not give up on this issue. Everybody knows where I am coming from. I have been very right up front. We brought the bill to the floor and we will continue to work on this issue, and with your help, Mr. Burton, hopefully we will be able to solve these problems as time goes by.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Burton follows:]

***** INSERT *****

The CHAIRMAN. At this time, I am going to turn the committee over to Mr. Doolittle, author of the bill, and he will call the first panel that will appear before us. I have to go to another meeting. I will try to return as soon as possible. Mr. Doolittle, you will be chairman.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. [Presiding.] We will invite the members of panel one to take a seat at the table. We will have testifying today, in this order, Mr. Walter Dellinger, The Honorable Dick Thornburgh, Mr. Jeffrey Farrow, Mr. William Treanor, and Mr. Robert Dalton.

We welcome all of you here and appreciate your arranging your affairs so that you could come and testify today on this important issue. We will begin with Mr. Dellinger, who is a professor of law at Duke University and I understand associated with O'Melveny and Myers in Washington, D.C. Mr. Dellinger?