

people who don't want it or don't understand it, while at the same time they deny participation in the Nation's democratic process to 3.6 million American citizens because they live in Puerto Rico.

I have enclosed with my statement a disc containing some very insightful and satirical criticism of our Nation's hypocrisy with Puerto Rican Americans made by British comedian John Oliver. You will not only be enlightened by it, you will also enjoy it very much. And I also made a short editor—3 minutes and 30 seconds, that will be available also.

Yes, we must stop begging for equality and demand it loud and clear and belligerently, if need be. It is way past the time when Congress and the President should have put an end to our disenfranchisement and to our being denied equal opportunities under the laws of our Nation. How can anyone who claims to believe in democracy stand idly by without putting an end to the discrimination and the unacceptable inequality between the 3,600,600 American citizens who live in Puerto Rico and the 360 million fellow citizens in the 50 states?

Whether we demand equality or not, it is the Congress and the President's duty, as leaders of the world's greatest democracy, to put an end to this inequality and denial to participate in our Nation's democracy.

We have decided to ask for admission as a state. In November 2012, we held a referendum in Puerto Rico where the people were asked to vote whether they wanted to remain as a U.S. territory or not. Fifty-four percent of the voters said no, and 46 percent said yes. The referendum ballot had a second question to give the voters three options, to wit: statehood, sovereign commonwealth, or independence. A solid majority of 61 percent voted in favor of Puerto Rico being admitted as a state.

The solid majority vote for statehood in 2012 cannot be ignored. This Congress must address the issue and consider enacting a bill to provide for the admission of Puerto Rico as a state. The bill should establish the conditions and the process, as well as the fiscal and economic arrangements that must be implemented for Puerto Rico to be admitted as a state. The plebiscite, or referendum, to be held would allow the American citizens who reside in Puerto Rico the opportunity to accept or deny the offer. The ballot would be a simple yes-or-no vote. All those who oppose statehood could vote no, so they cannot complain that they were not offered an option to exercise the right to vote.

Of the 37 territories admitted to the Union since the 13 colonies joined to establish the United States of America, not a single one was disenfranchised for as long a period of time as we have been for 98 years. Not a single territory of the 37 admitted to the Union were deprived of equal economic opportunities and benefits for as long as we have. Not a single territory of the 37 territories who were admitted had as many citizens killed or wounded in the Nation's wars as we have had in the 98 years since we became American citizens.

The awareness of the importance and the benefits of being a state of the Union has become more obvious to Puerto Rican Americans as they suffer the effects of a worsening economic depression. As they increasingly feel they no longer have reasonable