



MIKE'S POLICY FOR PUERTO RICO FACT SHEET

Mike has a plan to rebuild Puerto Rico and invest in the long-term success of the island. His plan aims to put Puerto Rico in charge of its own future, provide the relief necessary to create stability, and replace austerity measures with investments for growth. His plan also focuses on building the island's capacity to respond to a disaster, make the island more resilient to the effects of climate change, and investing in key infrastructure such as energy, telecommunications, public safety, transportation, and community-based planning.

MIKE'S PLAN

Supporting Statehood: Mike believes Puerto Rico should have full statehood. He believes that Puerto Ricans residing on the island should no longer be treated as second-class citizens, and should be afforded all the rights and support provided to all other American citizens. It is time we answered the call for equity and provide equal justice to all Americans.

Debt Management and Government Finance: Puerto Rico continues to be burdened by a federally-controlled debt restructuring process that has imposed draconian cuts to pensions, civil service pay, the university, and municipal governments that are the backbone of public safety and disaster response. Mike's plan provides for an independent audit, overseen by a representative board, of current debt and recent restructuring proposals, and implements a plan for debt relief based on the results. Mike will appoint members of the oversight board who will put party politics aside and prioritize the interests of the Puerto Rican people. In addition, Mike's plan will provide the same safety net funding to PR as any other US State. That means fair funding for Medicaid, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and Child Tax Credit, and full Social Security benefits.

Mike's plan provides for an independent audit, overseen by a representative board, of current debt and recent restructuring proposals, and implements a plan for debt relief based on the results. In addition, Mike will appoint members to the oversight board who will put politics aside and put the interests of the people of Puerto Rico first, including by providing essential services, stopping cuts to the university, civil service, municipalities, and pensions, and making room for investments that produce growth (e.g. infrastructure, university).

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Reconstruction and Resilience: Disaster relief for Puerto Rico has been held up for far too long. Only about a third of the \$43 billion allocated for Puerto Rico had been spent as of late 2019. The Department of Housing and Urban Development had released almost none of its funding until January of 2020, when it released \$8 billion out of \$18 billion allocated. When support does arrive, local communities have too little say in the allocation and reconstruction process. Federal officials make important decisions from afar, with contracts going mostly to mainland U.S. companies (in Puerto Rico, almost 90% by value). This renders reconstruction less responsive to local needs, limits the positive economic effects of federal spending, and erodes local communities' capacity to respond to disasters.

Mike will make the reconstruction of Puerto Rico, and the well-being of its 3.2 million citizens, a personal priority as president. He will take steps to empower community leadership and maximize local jobs and business development from reconstruction, including:

- Setting up a permanent local office to serve as a one-stop shop for island recovery, informing locals of what resources are available, what projects are proposed and how to bid for contracts.
- Providing technical assistance in key areas, such as applying for federally appropriated funds, reconstruction of homes and infrastructure and rebuilding of the electrical grid.
- Creating advisory councils, to give community leaders, NGOs and professional associations a role in deciding and monitoring how federal funds are spent.
- Publishing detailed, relevant information on reconstruction projects and contracts, including progress, evaluation and local jobs created.
- Giving the local office a mandate to build the islands' disaster-response capacity -- for example, by partnering with educational institutions to provide people with necessary skills.

Mike will invest in growth by using reconstruction funds to rebuild the island's infrastructure and economy and increase Puerto Rico's resilience to the impacts of climate change. According to the Global Climate Risk Index 2020, Puerto Rico [is the place in the world that has been hardest hit by climate change](#) over the last twenty years. Mike will expedite the release of reconstruction funds, waive requirements for local match if it slows reconstruction down, and help Puerto Rico secure more federal funds to rebuild housing, infrastructure and the electric grid, including from the national infrastructure investment plan Mike is proposing. This includes:

- Bringing together the resources and expertise of the government and the private sector with the island's own skill base to create a more resilient, sustainable economy.
- Including Puerto Rico in his federal infrastructure investment plan, upgrading schools, housing, public transportation, telecommunications, water supply, the energy grid, and connecting all the people of Puerto Rico to high-speed internet.
- Including Puerto Rico in his All-in Economy plan to invest in local communities, based on partnerships with universities and community leaders implementing innovation-based economic development strategies based on Puerto Rico's strengths, as well as in his criminal justice reform plans, to help Puerto Rico reduce its persistent crime problems and improve policing.
- Reduce local funding matches for states and municipalities that meet certain preparedness standards -- along the lines of the Community Rating System of the National Flood Insurance Program.

- Mike will take full advantage of the recently updated Stafford Act, and add other tools where necessary, so reconstruction efforts can focus on improving the resilience of buildings and infrastructure, and generally rebuilding back to modern & climate-resilient standards.
- Mike will reform the federal disaster recovery management to prioritize housing, address pre-existing housing issues, e.g. affordability, in rebuilding, and develop an approach to maximize climate resilience and minimize displacement

Mike will also allocate more funds for regular assessments of preparedness and ensure there's a clear plan in place to respond and direct federal resources when disaster hits, as well as a plan for rebuilding. And, under Mike's plan, Puerto Rico will get its fair share of funding for climate resilience, which includes federal support for upgrading infrastructure to be more resilient to storms, flooding, and other disasters. That includes full inclusion in Mike's proposed Climate-Safe Communities program for community-based planning and investments, prioritizing the most vulnerable communities, critical infrastructure (energy, telecommunications, public safety, transportation), and natural areas and working lands.

Clean Energy and Puerto Rico's Utilities: The current utility restructuring process is not moving far enough toward strong and independent regulation, a modern decentralized grid, or renewable resources, and relying on raising already-high electric rates. High electricity costs already weigh on families and businesses and recent earthquake damage could force a revisiting of the utility's debt.

Mike's plan will support Puerto Rican efforts to update the current utility, including by revisiting debt relief and strengthening the independence of the regulator. This includes:

- Offering the full support of the Secretary of Energy, National Labs, and experts chosen by Puerto Rico to implement plans for a clean, decentralized grid based on renewable energy like wind and solar, microgrids, demand response, energy storage, and distributed generation.
- Structuring federal funding, including low-interest loans and grants for low-income and rural communities to encourage the construction of a more decentralized and efficient power system. This would include distributed generation, microgrids, storage and a much-expanded use of renewable sources such as solar and wind.

MIKE'S RECORD

As mayor of New York City, and through his philanthropic work, Mike has been a longtime supporter of Puerto Rico. He has made several trips to the island, worked closely with the Puerto Rican community in New York, and been a vocal advocate for their rights as American citizens. Some highlights include:

- In July 2002, Mayor Bloomberg visited San Juan, Puerto Rico as a representative of president George W. Bush. The trip was made to pay homage to the thousands of Puerto Ricans who died in wars during the island's long, often-conflicted relationship with the United States and mark the 50th Anniversary of the constitution establishing the island as a commonwealth.
- Mike was praised by the New York Puerto Rican community for convincing Fifth Avenue property owners to stop boarding up their buildings for the Puerto Rican Day Parade

- Bloomberg Philanthropies has had four engagements with Puerto Rico. Two are public health related, one is arts related, and one is a Founders Project.

THE ISSUE

- For over 120 years, Puerto Rico has been a territory of the United States, and for 103 years Puerto Ricans have been American citizens by birth. More than 100,000 Puerto Ricans have honorably served in the U.S. Military.

Puerto Ricans are American citizens, but they don't pay federal income taxes if they live on the island. They do pay payroll taxes to fund Social Security and Medicare. The island gets limited funding for Medicaid and food stamps. It doesn't have representation in the Electoral College, and Puerto Ricans can't vote in the general election unless they live in the United States.

Statehood

The biggest obstacle for Puerto Rico is that there is no official process for a US territory to become a US state. Political leaders on the island have been asking for a clear path to statehood since the 1960s.

- Puerto Rico's congressional delegates have introduced multiple bills over the years, which granted Puerto Rico statehood based on the outcome of a popular vote on the island.
- The bipartisan Puerto Rican Statehood Admission Act would fund a ballot referendum in Puerto Rico in November 2020, asking voters on the island if they want statehood or not. It's a slight variation of previous ballot measures that went nowhere. If the bill passes, it would mark the third time Puerto Ricans have voted on the statehood issue since 2012.

Two in three Americans (66%) in a June Gallup survey said they favor admitting Puerto Rico, now a U.S. territory, as a U.S. state. This is consistent with the 59% to 65% range of public support Gallup has recorded for Puerto Rico statehood since 1962.

Disaster Relief and Recovery

- In 2017, the Category 4 Hurricane Maria covered almost the entire archipelago, completely wrecking its infrastructure, leaving most people without electricity for months, thousands deceased and even more homeless.
- In January 2019, Puerto Rico was rocked by a magnitude 6.8 earthquake, which was then followed by numerous aftershocks. In addition to damaging roads and buildings, disrupting power and communications, the quake has caused great anxiety among locals.
- Federal rules and practices have perpetuated vulnerabilities to disaster. Until 2018, the statute governing federal disaster relief -- known as the Stafford Act -- required homes and other buildings to be rebuilt exactly where and how they were, even if that exposes them to future disasters.

Trump

President Trump has described himself as the “savior of Puerto Rico.” - but has taken every opportunity to avoid helping the U.S. territory when it needed it most.

- President Trump said in 2016 that he supported statehood for Puerto Rico. In September 2019, he said on a radio interview that statehood was an “absolute no”, citing his running feud with San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz, a critic of the federal response to Hurricane Maria. “With the mayor of San Juan as bad as she is and as incompetent as she is, Puerto Rico shouldn’t be talking about statehood until they get some people that really know what they’re doing,” Trump told Geraldo Rivera in an interview conducted with WTAM Radio in Cleveland, later calling Cruz “a horror show.”
- President Trump personally intervened in budget talks to cut Medicaid funding to Puerto Rico by half, Politico reported. Democrats and Republicans had agreed to provide the territory with \$12 billion over four years as it sought a more long-term funding option. But the president inserted himself into the talks, suggesting the amount was too much. Rather than \$12 billion over four years, the budget deal now allocates \$5.7 billion over two—something the White House framed as a “win.” “With the historical waste we have faced in Puerto Rico,” Office of Management and Budget Spokesperson Chase Jennings said, “additional funding was not needed or fiscally responsible.”
- When Hurricane Dorian was bearing down on the island, Trump tweeted: “Puerto Rico is one of the most corrupt places on earth. Their political system is broken and their politicians are either Incompetent or Corrupt. Congress approved Billions of Dollars last time, more than anyplace else has ever gotten, and it is sent to Crooked Pols. No good!” In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, Trump repeatedly suggested the death toll was artificially inflated by his political opponents “in order to make me look as bad as possible.”
- He consistently resisted sending proportionate emergency funding to the island following 2017’s devastating Hurricane Maria. Trump complained about the aid he has provided as well, saying “Cannot continue to hurt our Farmers and States with these massive payments,” the president tweeted earlier this year, “and so little appreciation!”
- In January 2020, President Trump accused the island of using disaster relief funding to pay off its debt — something it was not, in fact, doing.