

December 17, 2020

The Honorable Joseph R Biden
President-elect

The Honorable Kamala D. Harris
Vice President-elect

Dear Mr. President-elect and Madam Vice President-elect,

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, urge the incoming Biden-Harris Administration to respect the will of the majority of Puerto Rico's voters who have requested admission as a state of the Union. Last month, for the first time in history, voters on the island were asked whether "Puerto Rico should be immediately admitted into the Union as a state" and 52 percent of voters, over 620,000, said "YES." Now that Puerto Rico has spoken, Congress must begin acting on that mandate immediately.

Puerto Rico has lived under the U.S. flag for over 120 years, and for over 100 years Puerto Ricans have been proud American citizens. Yet, as the Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed, and the enactment of the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) further demonstrated, Puerto Rico remains subject to the plenary powers of Congress under the territorial clause of the U.S. Constitution.

America's core founding value of "government by consent of the governed" has still not yet been applied to the more than 3 million U.S. citizens who live in Puerto Rico. As a result, island residents are being deprived of full equality under the law and full democracy in their government at both the local and federal levels.

This denial of equality and democracy in Puerto Rico has dire consequences for the Island, and for America as a whole:

- Disenfranchised citizenry with limited non-voting representation in the U.S. House, no representation in the U.S. Senate and no voting rights for President;
- Lack of accountability and representation at the federal level to meet Puerto Rico's needs, goals and aspirations;
- Lower quality of life for island residents in critical areas including healthcare, nutrition, education, transportation, environment, and security;
- Unequal playing field that limits economic development opportunities, promotes dependency, and denies clarity on long term economic development direction;
- Underdeveloped interstate commerce and international trade potential;
- Massive population exodus because relocation is the only way to enjoy the full benefits of U.S. citizenship, separating families and communities;
- Large deficits and debt spending, and fiscal crisis due to ease of borrowing and underinvestment by the federal government;



Democratic Party of Puerto Rico



- Slow and inefficient response and recovery to natural disasters;
- Denies tens of thousands of military service members and veterans from Puerto Rico, who have fought in every US war since 1917, the right to vote for their Commander in Chief, even as they defended the American democracy they are denied at home;
- Loss of America's moral standing and credibility as a promoter of democratic governance at the global level; and,
- Persistence of an unaccountable and non-representative form of governance under the U.S. Constitution that has weakened American democratic intuitions and made them more vulnerable.

Even though Congress and the White House have paid increasing amounts of attention to Puerto Rico in the last decade due to the various crises that the island has faced, they have taken a sporadic and piecemeal approach. While this may temporarily alleviate some issues, it will never allow the development of a coherent and long-term policy framework necessary to maximize Puerto Rico's potential. Failure to recognize how the economic, fiscal, social and governance challenges of Puerto Rico are interrelated to the territorial status presents a real threat to the island's long-term recovery. That is why the resolution of Puerto Rico's ultimate political status has to be the central element of any comprehensive effort to help the island.

The majority of Puerto Ricans, like all Americans, want to be treated equally under the law and to have an equal voice in the government that regulates their lives. Their vote on November 3rd confirms that an absolute majority of U.S. citizens on the island favor statehood, but only Congress has the power act on the clearly and democratically expressed will of the Puerto Rican people.

Our organizations represent individuals and communities from across the island and in the mainland U.S. We come from all races, religions and socioeconomic backgrounds. What unites us is that we see the struggle for Puerto Rico statehood as part of the long trajectory of citizen-led movements that have made America *a more perfect Union*. We also know that we are not alone, since recent national polls have shown that the majority of Americans stateside also favor Puerto Rico statehood.

As you prepare for the Biden-Harris Administration, we urge you to stand for our shared American values of democracy and equality. America must respect and act on the legitimate call for equal rights and responsibilities by its fellow citizens in Puerto Rico.

Sincerely,

Hon. Jenniffer González-Colón
President
Republican Party of Puerto Rico

Hon. Charles A. Rodriguez
President
Democratic Party of Puerto Rico

Hon. José Aponte-Hernández
Executive Director
**Instituto Misión Estadista,
New Progressive Party**

George H. Laws García
Executive Director
Puerto Rico Statehood Council

Annabel Guillén
President
Igualdad, Futuro Seguro

Irma R. Rodriguez
President
Puerto Rico Escogió Estadidad

Gabriela M. Medina Marrero
President
Young Democrats of Puerto Rico

Josué E. Rivera
Chairman
Puerto Rico Young Republican Federation

Elvin Méndez Rosa
President
Movimiento Revolución Estadista

Luis Matos
President
Renacer Ideológico Estadista

José J. Díaz
President
U.S. Flag Task Force

José Cabrera
Chair
Puerto Rico Star Project (Proyecto Estrella)

Jorge Rodríguez Feliciano
President
Puertorriqueños Pro Unión Permanente

Victor Perez
Director
**Organizacion Veteranos Progresistas,
Partido Nuevo Progresista**

Ken Oliver-Méndez
Director
United States Council for Puerto Rico Statehood

Wilfredo Rivera
President
Impulso 51 / Estado Igualdad

Joel Salgado
Spokesperson
We The People

Ricardo Marrero Passapera
President
Ahora Si Puerto Rico