



PUERTO RICO RESIDENT COMMISSIONER INVOKES DIGNITY, EQUALITY IN CLARION CALL FOR PUERTO RICO STATEHOOD

(May 28, 2010) Resident Commissioner for Puerto Rico in the U.S. House of Representatives, the Hon. Pedro R. Pierluisi issued a clarion call for citizen equality and Statehood for Puerto Rico in the Puerto Rico daily newspaper *El Vocero* on Friday, May 28, 2010. The Resident Commissioner is Puerto Rico's sole non-voting delegate in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The article which was published in Spanish is translated below.

Friday, May 28, 2010

Statehood: A Future of Dignity, Equality and Progress

For: El Vocero

By: Pedro R. Pierluisi - Resident Commissioner for Puerto Rico, U.S. House of Representatives

The debate on Puerto Rico's status occupies our public discourse on a daily basis. The absence of a final permanent status keeps us wrapped in this conflict that divides and excites us. The time has come to resolve this centuries-old dilemma and choose the logical path for our American citizens: Statehood.

It is unquestionable that the vast majority of our people treasure their American citizenship and wish to see permanent union with the United States. Although we have not yet taken the necessary steps to see Puerto Rico become the 51st state, there is no doubt that we are advancing in that direction.

Statehood is the only status option that has seen an increase in support in the plebiscites that we have had on the Island. This struggle is a matter of civil rights, of participatory democratic government, and of socio-economic development.

Statehood is the opportunity to dignify our status and relationship with the nation to which we belong. Full participation in our government is the cornerstone of democracy. Only with the vote and the congressional representation we deserve will we be fully and completely heard.

Puerto Rico is subject to the laws and regulations of the federal government, but only with Statehood can we be part of the decision-making process at the national level. In order to guarantee that the priorities of our people are the priorities of the American nation, we must have our six representatives and two senators in Congress and have the power to vote for the President of the United States.

Statehood guarantees the equality of all American citizens. It will ensure us of all the rights that emanate from that citizenship, including equal and just treatment in all federal socio-economic development programs.

Despite the participation of Puerto Rico in federal health care reform, only with Statehood will we achieve parity in funding for the health of our people. Similarly, in the state of Puerto Rico, the elderly and those with disabilities will receive the support they need to cover their living expenses under the Supplemental Security Income program, and our veterans will receive equal benefits under equal conditions. Other federal programs such as public housing, services to individuals with disabilities, care for the elderly, nutritional assistance and help to low and moderate income families will see significant increases in funding if we become a state.

Statehood will ensure our progress and economic development. The nature of our current status does not permit the growth we all aspire to. With Statehood, we will integrate ourselves completely into the United States economy, making ourselves a more attractive destination for investment and tourism.

History does not lie. All territories that became states experienced great economic growth. As in those states, the value and worth of properties and businesses in Puerto Rico will increase, from the neighborhood store and barbershop on the corner, to large industries and businesses.

As usual, the spokesmen of inertia and the prophets of doom have miraculously appeared to invoke pending disaster. They speak of taxes, of English, of culture, of our athletes and our beautiful women. They spread fear to impede change. They criticize our people with the intent of impeding our progress under the American flag.

But truth prevails when the cause is just. All things that are worth the fight, like equality, require effort and sacrifice. Integrating ourselves to the federal tax system is necessary to integrate ourselves to the American union, but the majority of Puerto Ricans will not have to pay federal taxes. What is more, most will receive tax credits and incentives for their work, obtaining additional income. Only the rich and large corporations will pay, and this will only happen after a transition period in which asset values increase and state taxes decrease.

English language use has been a political football for detractors of statehood, preventing our people from enjoying the bilingualism that they themselves give to their own children. All Puerto Ricans ought to aspire to be bilingual regardless of our status. One is no less Puerto Rican because they can speak English. No one can take away our language and culture. One only has to visit New York, Florida, Texas, or California to see proof of this.

Our athletes and Boricua beauties will always stand out in international competitions. Just as we now recognize our baseball and basketball players in the major leagues, we will continue to extol the accomplishments of all Puerto Ricans.

The time is now for us to rise as a people, demand our rights, contribute our talents and claim our deserved place in the flag of stars and stripes. The time of being content with only some of the benefits of American citizenship is over. With Statehood, a future of dignity, equality and progress awaits us.