

NEW POLL: STATEHOOD FAVORED BY LARGE MAJORITY IN PUERTO RICO

Statehood Support at 57 percent while Status quo garners 34 percent

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A recent poll shows that now more than ever, a large island majority wants Statehood for Puerto Rico. The poll, conducted in late May by Kaagan Research Associates of New York and later published in *El Nuevo Día*, Puerto Rico's largest daily newspaper shows 57% of Puerto Ricans want Statehood as the island's permanent political status, dismissing the current unrepresentative commonwealth status outright by an overwhelming 23 percentage points. This 23-point spread is the largest recorded in any political status poll in Puerto Rico's history.

Puerto Rico has not yet held a political status plebiscite that was agreed to in advance by the United States Congress. In recent years, proponents of the status quo have floated concepts for an alternative status that are not constitutionally viable. As a territory of the United States, the U. S. Congress in Washington, D.C. retains final decision-making authority over Puerto Rico's status. Puerto Rico has the distinction of been the longest-held territory of the United States in the country's history; some 110 years since the Spanish-American War in 1898. Previously, Oklahoma had spent the longest period as a territory before becoming a full state of the federal union after 104 years.

77 Percent Want Equal Rights as State of the Union over Independence

The poll results show that only 34% of Puerto Ricans prefer the status quo, while 57% want Statehood for the island. Only 5% of Puerto Ricans support independence according to the poll. When asked to choose between fully representative sovereignty as a State of the union or a fully independent country, 77% favored Statehood for Puerto Rico with 12 percent in favor of independence.

These numbers mark the first time that any status option has held an absolute majority since Puerto Rico's first status plebiscite in 1967. Three plebiscites have taken place on the island, none sanctioned by Congress, making the results of little consequence to many Puerto Ricans. Voter turnout for the 1998 plebiscite was low by Puerto Rican standards at 71 percent.

Such overwhelming support for Statehood comes on the eve of November's island-wide election, in which all major elected officials in Puerto Rico, including Governor, non-voting Resident Commissioner in the U.S. House of Representatives, island-based government offices, and 78 municipal governments are up for election or reelection.