



Dear Senator,

On behalf of the Council and our nationwide membership, I am writing to you to urge your support for H.R. 2499, *The Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2010*. This important self-determination legislation will provide Congressional endorsement for unbiased and impartial self-determination for the first time in the island's history. If successful, this bill will allow an opportunity for our four million fellow American citizens in Puerto Rico to democratically express their desired status preferences chosen from all constitutionally acceptable alternatives.

The island has been a territory of the United States for 112 years, which equates to almost half the life of our great country's history. Though measures during our association have afforded statutory United States citizenship through the 1917 Jones-Shafroth Act and limited island self-government through Public Law 600 in 1950, Puerto Ricans continue to live as second-class citizens, governed by the will of Congress without their full participation. With your leadership and support, the unresolved question of Puerto Rico's status in relation to the Union will finally be resolved. With your action, these four million Americans will have the opportunity to express their desire to attain equality of citizenship and standing, democratically, to the Congress.

As advocates of education and equality, the Council believes that equality for the four million American citizens living on the U.S. island-territory is unattainable without freely exercised self-determination. Similarly, a self-determination process without expressed congressional support in advance will be a substantially weakened one from the outset. The *Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2010* is significant in this regard, as it would impartially ensure that Puerto Ricans understand the sense of Congress that Puerto Ricans should, of a right, voice their will and express their positions on self-determination. We believe that as fellow Americans, Puerto Ricans deserve the right to express their opinion with the expectation that their government; the United States Congress, will hear their voices.

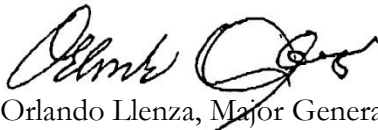
Puerto Ricans are proud Americans that have fought in every major U.S. engagement since 1898 with many making the ultimate sacrifice defending the ideals of equality, freedom and democracy that are the foundation of our great country. Some 150,000 veterans of our Armed Forces and foreign wars rest today in the U.S. national cemetery in Bayamón. However, under the island's current territorial status, the Americans of Puerto Rico are not equal, they are not free, and have not been afforded an equal opportunity to participate in the democratic process of the country to which they have sworn allegiance. Certainly, Puerto Ricans can debate, discuss and act, but in the absence of clear language from Congress, the public discourse in Puerto Rico will be muddied by opponents of self-determination for narrow political ends with the goal of negating principled public discussion on citizenship rights, equality and sovereignty. *The Puerto Rico Democracy Act* will make it clear that the current unequal territorial status is not acceptable in perpetuity.

Since Puerto Rico first became a territory, the Senate has never acted to end the inequality that results from the unequal territorial status of the island. In the island's 2008 elections, Puerto

Ricans spoke clearly; electing a governor, a vast legislative majority, a resident commissioner and an overwhelming majority of mayors, all on a platform to see the issue of the island's status resolved. It was a clear message that the people of Puerto Rico seek an end to the unequal territorial status. With your leadership, these proud Americans will be afforded an unequivocal opportunity to reiterate this to Congress.

The *Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2010* offers all constitutionally viable status alternatives for the self-determination of Puerto Rico. With clarity of action and voice, successful passage of the bill in the Senate will dispel the dishonest argument that the four million American citizens on the island are, and should be, content to live with second-class citizenship, disproportionate unenfranchised representation and perpetual inequality. With your leadership, the status of Puerto Rico can be finally resolved. The Puerto Rican people will have the opportunity to express their status preference with congressional sanction. Thank you for your consideration. I am sure you will agree that the proud Americans of Puerto Rico have deserved better and as fellow American citizens, deserve an opportunity to attain equal citizenship. With your support, the Senate can ensure that Puerto Ricans have the opportunity to be treated equally and be equally heard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Orlando Llenza', written in a cursive style.

Orlando Llenza, Major General, USAF (Ret.)
Chairman

The U.S. Council for Puerto Rico Statehood is an education and advocacy organization dedicated to the education of all Americans about Puerto Rico, its current status within the union of the United States, and why Statehood is in the best interests of all Americans, in the 50 states and Puerto Rico, given the unequal effects of the current status on citizenship, sovereignty, political and civil rights.