



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SANCTIONS ISLAND PLEBISCITE ON STATUS

H.R. 2499 authorizes Puerto Rico to conduct an impartial two-part plebiscite providing an equal opportunity to maintain or terminate the current unequal territorial status of the island. Puerto Ricans would first vote on whether to maintain the current status quo and remain a U.S. Territory under Article IV of the U.S. Constitution or seek a sovereignty-granting alternative.

If Puerto Ricans decide to maintain the current territorial status, the bill would authorize the Government of Puerto Rico to conduct a referendum every eight years until the status issue is resolved. However, if the people of Puerto Rico vote to change the island's status, a second vote would offer Puerto Ricans the opportunity to choose between constitutionally valid options: Statehood within the Union, Independence or Sovereignty in Free Association. H.R. 2499 passed in the House of Representatives on April 29, 2010 with a majority of 54 votes.

Popular Democratic Party Refuses Support after Proposing Successful Amendment

During House proceedings, an amendment offered by Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC) was adopted that required the current territorial status to be included again during the plebiscite's second vote, requiring Puerto Rican's to vote on changing the current status a second time. A majority of the Puerto Ricans would have already voted against it in the first vote in order to have a second vote. Rep Foxx introduced the amendment at the urging of the island's commonwealth-supporting Popular Democratic Party. Despite the inclusion of the amendment at their urging, to date the Popular Democratic Party has refused to support the self-determination legislation.

The bill must pass the U.S. Senate during the current Congress and be sent to President Obama in order to be passed into law. Mid-term elections will take place in November and a new Congress will convene in January, 2011. Any congressional action after Congress adjourns in December will require new legislation in the next Congress.