

Is Puerto Rico a Free Associated State?

Despite its denomination as “Estado Libre Asociado” or “free associated state,” Puerto Rico does not fall under the same category as states currently “freely associated” with the U.S.

The Facts About Free Associated States

- A Free Associated State is an independent nation with a treaty-based association with the U.S.
- Limited access to U.S. government protections and federal programs
- The only states currently associated with the U.S. are Palau, The Marshall Islands, and The Federated States of Micronesia

Drawbacks of Free Associated State

- No automatic United States Citizenship.
- No United States Passport
- Limited access to Federal programs and funds compared to U.S. states and territories
- Complete unilateral withdrawal from relationship without agreement between Free Associated State and the United States
- U.S. can end the association by congressional vote
- All federal economic support and benefits subject to unilateral termination
- Result of unilateral withdrawal? Independent nation, no U.S. constitutional protections, benefits

Free Associated State Benefits

- Light travel and residence restrictions between associated states and the United States
- Defense and disaster relief is provided to free associated states