

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 31

By Goins

A RESOLUTION relative to U.S. statehood for Puerto Rico.

WHEREAS, Puerto Rico has a long and distinguished history that encompasses its last 118 years under U.S. sovereignty; and

WHEREAS, after Columbus's arrival in the New World, Puerto Rico was under Spanish control almost continuously for more than four centuries until 1898; and

WHEREAS, in the summer of that year, the United States invaded Puerto Rico as part of our Caribbean intervention during the Spanish-American War; and

WHEREAS, after a thirteen-day military campaign, U.S. forces took Puerto Rico; they encountered little opposition and were instead greeted by Puerto Ricans with cheers; and

WHEREAS, in December 1898, the Treaty of Paris, which ended the Spanish-American War, gave control of Puerto Rico to the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, even prior to this historic event, there was strong sentiment for annexation by the U.S. among Puerto Ricans, because America was, and still is, the main export market for Puerto Rican goods; and

WHEREAS, in 1917, Congress granted U.S. citizenship to all former Spanish subjects and their children living in Puerto Rico; reorganized the island's government into legislative, executive, and judicial branches to mirror state governments; created a new federal district court on the island; and made Puerto Rico subject to all federal laws; and

WHEREAS, in 1948, Puerto Rico was granted a fully representative local government when Congress first allowed the island to elect its governor, who had previously been a presidential appointee; and

WHEREAS, since the island was granted "free associated state" or commonwealth status in 1952, Puerto Rico's governmental structure has been largely unchanged; and

WHEREAS, during the 118 years of a mutually beneficial relationship, ties between the United States and Puerto Rico have strengthened in ways that are of constitutional significance, as Puerto Ricans have steadily integrated into American culture and institutions of U.S. government have grown substantially in Puerto Rico; and

WHEREAS, 400,000 Puerto Ricans have served in the United States armed forces in every conflict since World War I; and

WHEREAS, perhaps the greatest indicator of the integration of Puerto Rico into American society is the fact that, as of the 2010 Census, more Puerto Ricans now live on the mainland U.S. than on Puerto Rico; and

WHEREAS, despite this cultural and economic integration, Puerto Ricans are still relegated to second-class citizenship due to their island being an unincorporated U.S. territory instead of a sovereign state of the Union; Puerto Ricans do not have voting representation in the United States Congress, which has plenary powers over their affairs, nor are they entitled to electoral votes for President; and

WHEREAS, in a 2012 local referendum, a fifty-four-percent majority voted to end Puerto Rico's status as a U.S. territory, and sixty-one percent approved U.S. statehood over other options; and

WHEREAS, in its national platform, the Republican Party has pledged its support for the admission of Puerto Rico as a fully sovereign state into the Union; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico have spoken, and this nation should support their desire to seek statehood; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that this General Assembly urges the United States Congress to enact legislation enabling Puerto Rico's admission as the fifty-first state of the Union.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Speaker and the Clerk of the United States House of Representatives, the President and the Secretary of the United States Senate, and each member of Tennessee's delegation to the United States Congress.