

H. Res. 433

In the House of Representatives, U.S.,

March 16, 2004.

Whereas Luis A. Ferré was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico, on February 17, 1904, soon after Spain ceded control of Puerto Rico to the United States in 1898;

Whereas in 1917, when Luis Ferré was 13 years old, the people of Puerto Rico were granted United States citizenship;

Whereas Luis Ferré's respect for the United States was fostered by his years as a college student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts;

Whereas Luis Ferré returned to Puerto Rico with a degree in engineering and a firm belief in Puerto Rican statehood;

Whereas Luis Ferré built his father's business, Puerto Rico Iron Works, into a hugely successful industrial enterprise;

Whereas Luis Ferré, who entered politics at a propitious time in the island's history, was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1951 and was elected to the Puerto Rican House of Representatives in 1953;

Whereas Luis Ferré saw the opportunity to advocate Puerto Rican statehood in 1967, the year of the first political status plebiscite on the island;

Whereas, although Puerto Rico remained a commonwealth after the 1967 plebiscite, Luis Ferré utilized the plebiscite to mobilize statehood forces and to establish a new political entity, the New Progressive Party;

Whereas in 1968 Luis Ferré ran for Governor of Puerto Rico as the New Progressive Party candidate and won a close race;

Whereas Luis Ferré served as Governor for one term, from 1969 to 1973;

Whereas, as Governor, Luis Ferré ordered the liberation of all political prisoners incarcerated in Puerto Rican prisons as an act of national reconciliation;

Whereas when Luis Ferré was elected Governor he launched an effort to address what he called “the inequalities of Puerto Rican society”, with initiatives to grant property titles to people living on public lands and to build multiple housing structures in rural and urban areas of Puerto Rico to provide homes for low-income families;

Whereas, during his term as Governor, Luis Ferré signed into law several pieces of social legislation that contributed to the betterment of Puerto Rican workers, including pay increases for teachers and policemen as well as other public employees and “Christmas bonuses”, whereby workers received a check for at least 4 percent of their annual salary during the holiday season;

Whereas, as Governor, Luis Ferré appointed the first woman to a cabinet-level position, selecting Julita Rivera de Vicenty as Secretary of Labor of Puerto Rico;

Whereas Luis Ferré made great contributions to Puerto Rican cultural life, founding the Ponce Museum of Arts and giving scholarships to artists to further their studies in disciplines such as painting, visual arts, and music;

Whereas, throughout his life over the past century, Luis Ferré became an honored elder statesman and philanthropist;

Whereas Luis Ferré is one of four Puerto Ricans who have received the Presidential Medal of Freedom; and

Whereas Luis Ferré passed away on October 21, 2003, at the age of 99: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) honors Luis A. Ferré for his outstanding political leadership, business savvy, advocacy for social justice, and great love and support of the arts; and

(2) expresses condolences on his passing to his wife, Tiody de Jesus, and his two children, Antonio Luis and Rosario, and grandchildren.

Attest:

Clerk.