

a comprehensive overhaul of the Superfund Program to ensure that we do not perpetuate the brownfields problem across the country. The Congress needs to address liability issues, remedy selection concerns, and other matters that have prevented Superfund from accomplishing more in its 17-year existence. I am both dissatisfied with the current pace of NPL site cleanups convinced that the roots of many of the brownfields problems lie throughout the Superfund statute.

I look to the chairman of the Commerce Committee, Mr. BILEY, and the chairman of the Finance and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee, Mr. OXLEY, for leadership on comprehensive Superfund reform. These two chairmen ably fought for Superfund reform in the last Congress, but the process unfortunately broke down in the mire of election year politics. I hope that 1997 offers more promise, and that they will consider including the Land Recycling Act as part of their Superfund reform package.

MAKING GOVERNMENT AGENCIES MORE ACCESSIBLE

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 1997

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation that will amend the truth in savings law to make Government agencies more accessible to the public.

In recent years State and local governments, along with the Federal Government, have made a conscientious effort to improve the quality and efficiency of their customer services.

Public expectations now focus on convenience, quickness, and completeness when receiving public services.

Given the option, many people would prefer to register their car, pay their water bill, or their real estate and personal property taxes over the telephone with a credit card.

It is quick, convenient, and spares people the time and expense of visiting the motor vehicle office or tax office and spending their time waiting in long lines.

Payment of taxes with credit cards has the added benefit of enabling taxpayers to avoid the stigma and added expense of late tax payments, since the card holder can avoid the late penalty fee and extend their payments out over several months.

This legislation is necessary because the major credit card companies insist that public agencies be treated the same as department stores and restaurants who are prohibited by the credit card companies from passing the cost of credit card transactions directly onto the customer.

Merchants must swallow this cost or pass this cost on to their cash paying customer through higher prices. Few merchants complain because they can raise their prices and encourage their customers to buy more on credit than they could pay with cash.

Public agencies are different.

The Government should not raise everyone's taxes to pay for credit card user fees.

Moreover, State and local law may prohibit or restrict public agencies from absorbing or spreading this cost.

If the Internal Revenue Service were to allow the public to pay taxes with a credit card, it could not absorb the 3-percent service charge per credit card transaction.

Under Mastercard and Visa's policy, the IRS would have to absorb the \$300 million in service charges the two companies would collect on \$10 billion worth of credit card tax payments. State and local government agencies face a similar obstacle.

The legislation I am introducing will remove this obstacle and provide the public a convenient option for conducting their business with public agencies at a minimum of expense.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE UNITED STATES-PUERTO RICO POLITICAL STATUS ACT

HON. DON YOUNG

OF ALASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 1997

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, today, I'm pleased to introduce the United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act (H.R. 856). This landmark legislation will end 100 years of uncertainty for the people of Puerto Rico and allow them to determine the political status for themselves and future generations.

The text of the legislation is identical to the updated version of the bill introduced as H.R. 4281 in the 104th Congress on September 28, 1996. This bill reflects the efforts of many of my colleagues during the last 2 years to formulate a fair, clear, and complete process that will once and for all, provide for the final resolution of Puerto Rico's political status. This is the starting point in the process which is long overdue and the people of Puerto Rico deserve.

The Legislature of Puerto Rico has once again asked the Congress to take action to resolve Puerto Rico's political status. Two weeks ago, a bipartisan delegation from Puerto Rico personally delivered copies of the resolution, asking the 105th Congress—and I quote:

to respond to the Democratic aspirations of the American citizens of Puerto Rico in order to attain a process which will guarantee the prompt decolonization of Puerto Rico, through a plebiscite sponsored by the Federal Government, which shall be held no later than 1998.

This bill answers the Legislature's request by providing for a vote on Puerto Rico's political status before December 31, 1998.

As the only Representative from Alaska—a State that made the transition from territorial status to full self-government—I know first hand that the process does work. This bill provides the process by which Congress and the residents of Puerto Rico define and approve politically acceptable options through a multi-staged Democratic process. This allows for the political will of the United States and Puerto Rico to be determined freely and democratically.

The U.S. Congress and the President have a moral obligation to act so the people of Puerto Rico can finally resolve their status. We are taking action today by re-introducing the United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act. Today marks the beginning of a historic

effort by the Congress to actually solve Puerto Rico's political status.

I appreciate the strong bipartisan support for this legislation by such a large number of Members of Congress during the 104th Congress, and now in the 105th Congress. I particularly want to thank Speaker GINGRICH for his involvement and support of this measure since its inception. Puerto Rico's delegate, Resident Commissioner CARLOS ROMERO-BARCELÓ, has been working side-by-side with the sponsors of this bill, and his cooperation and leadership has been critical to this endeavor. My colleague from New York, JOSÉ SERRANO, has also been particularly supportive and helpful in this process. I also want to thank Chairman GALLEGLY, Chairman GILMAN, Chairman BURTON, Chairman POMBO, and Mr. KENNEDY from Rhode Island for their outstanding efforts to address Puerto Rico throughout the 104th Congress; Chairman SOLOMON of the Rules Committee for his excellent work on the fast track procedures, as well as all the other distinguished co-sponsors for both political parties.

Resolving Puerto Rico's political status is a top priority of the Committee on Resources Oversight Plan for the 105th Congress. The leadership of the House also recognizes this as a matter of the highest priority.

To demonstrate the commitments of this Congress to act quickly on this matter, three hearings have been scheduled on this legislation. The first will be held in Washington, DC, on Wednesday, March 19, 1997 to enable the leaders of the Government of Puerto Rico and the political parties to express their views regarding their preferred status. I will also ask the Clinton administration to present their formal position regarding the legislation at this hearing. In addition, two hearings will be conducted in Puerto Rico, the first in San Juan on April 19 and the second in Mayaguez on April 21.

Those hearings will be dedicated to allow Congress to hear directly from the widest possible spectrum of views of the people of Puerto Rico. No proposal or idea will be excluded from the process, but we intend for Congress to work its will on this question in 1997.

That is what the people of this Nation, including our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico, deserve from the 105th Congress, and in my view that is what the national interest requires us to do.

Following is the text of House Concurrent Resolution 2, enacted by the Puerto Rico Legislature of January 23, 1997, which asks the 105th Congress and the President to sponsor a vote in Puerto Rico on political status before the end of 1998:

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 2

To request of the One Hundred Fifth Congress and the President of the United States of America to respond to the democratic aspirations of the American citizens of Puerto Rico, in order to achieve a process that guarantees the prompt decolonization of Puerto Rico by means of a plebiscite sponsored by the Federal Government, which must be held no later than 1998.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

As the present century draws to a close and a new millennium full of hope is about to begin, men of good will must act affirmatively to leave any colonial vestige behind them.

The United States of America has contributed to fundamental changes towards democracy and full participation in political processes in other countries, thus asserting the universal principles of human rights.

Just as the United States has successfully promoted democratic values in the international sphere, it is now appropriate for that nation to attend to the claims for full political participation of the 3.75 million American citizens of Puerto Rico.

On November 14, 1993, the Government of Puerto Rico supported a plebiscite on Puerto Rico's status. Three different political options were submitted to the People: Statehood, represented by the New Progressive Party; Independence, represented by the Puerto Rican Independence Party; and Commonwealth, represented by the Popular Democratic Party. This last option, redefined by its advocates, is based on a bilateral pact that cannot be revoked or amended unilaterally by Congress. It had the following essential elements: first, parity of founding with the states in federal assistance programs; second, tax exemption within the scope of the former Section 936 of the United States Internal Revenue Code, since repealed; and third, the power of the Commonwealth to impose tariffs on agricultural products imported into Puerto Rico. The Commonwealth option obtained 48.2% of the votes cast in the 1993 plebiscite, while Statehood obtained 46% and Independence, 4%. In a prior plebiscite, convoked by the Government of Puerto Rico in 1967, Commonwealth had obtained 60% of the votes, while Statehood obtained 37.8%.

On December 14, 1994, the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico approved Concurrent Resolution No. 62. By means of this Resolution, Congress was asked to state its opinion on the redefinition of Commonwealth mentioned above. If the elements of that redefinition were deemed not to be viable, Congress was requested to inform the people of Puerto Rico about which status options it would be willing to consider in order to resolve our colonial problem, and what procedural steps should be taken to this effect.

On February 29, 1996, the leaders of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Resources of the One Hundred Fourth Congress and its Subcommittee on Insular and Native American Affairs, together with the House Committee on International Relations and its Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, answered the People and the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico by means of a Statement of Principles, indicating the unfeasibility of accepting the redefinition of Commonwealth submitted in the 1993 plebiscite. These same Congressional leaders also expressed their interest in promoting Federal legislation so that the One Hundred Fourth Congress could expedite the steps to be followed in resolving the status problem of Puerto Rico. They fulfilled their pledge by submitting H.R. 3024 and S.R. 2019 with bipartisan support, for the purpose of responding to Concurrent Resolution No. 62, approved in 1994 by the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico.

On June 28, 1996 four Congressmen who are members of the Minority Delegation of the House of Representatives of the United States also responded to Concurrent Resolution No. 62, through a letter in which they stated that "it is clear that Puerto Rico remains a non-incorporated territory that is subject to the authority of Congress under the Territorial Clause . . .", thus upholding the conclusions set forth in the February 29, 1996 letter, mentioned above.

Barely a month later, on July 11, 1996, eleven Congressmen belonging to the Minority Delegation of the House of Representatives of the United States sent a letter to the Mi-

nority Leader of the House, stating their total support of H.R. 3024, which had been presented to that body in response to Concurrent Resolution No. 62.

The Subcommittee on Insular and Native American Affairs of the United States House of Representatives, exercised primary jurisdiction over the matters set forth in Concurrent Resolution No. 62. While studying and approving H.R. 3024 on June 12, 1996, the Subcommittee considered proposals—rejected until then—for the adoption of the redefinition of Commonwealth, either as included in the 1993 plebiscite ballot or, as an alternative, the non binding and never-adopted definition presented in a 1990 legislative report to the United States House of Representatives on the status of Puerto Rico. Both proposals on Commonwealth were overwhelmingly defeated in votes of ten to one for the first, and eight to one, for the second.

On June 26, 1996, the House Committee on Rules adopted House Report 104-713, Part 2, which endorsed well-founded provisions for the purpose of facilitating congressional consideration of the measures that responded to the results of the self-determination process, as contemplated in H.R. 3024, which set forth a 3-stage decision-making process, with periodic referral in the event of an inconclusive result in any of the stages.

We recognize that substantial progress was achieved during the One Hundred Fourth Congress in establishing a federal policy to promote the decolonization of Puerto Rico. But today, at the commencement of the work of the One Hundred Fifth Congress, the reality of the situation is that after almost a century during which Puerto Rico has been under the sovereignty of the United States, the Federal Government has never approved or implemented specific measures geared to promoting a process in a conclusive binding manner, by which the American citizens of Puerto Rico may democratically express their wishes regarding their final political status.

We also recognize that even though important votes on the political status in Puerto Rico were carried out in 1967 and 1993 under the auspices of the Government of Puerto Rico, other voting events will be required in order to resolve the status question once and for all; and that Congress has still not defined the interests and responsibilities of the Federal Government regarding that process.

The need to resolve Puerto Rico's political status persists. It must be carried out by means of an effective and enlightened process, whose legitimacy is acceptable to Congress, acting in the exercise of the sovereignty of the United States over Puerto Rico, pursuant to the full powers granted under the Territorial Clause of the Constitution of the United States, Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2 and which enables the People of Puerto Rico to achieve a sovereign political status through realistic and decolonizing alternatives.

Following the plebiscites carried out by local initiative in 1967 and 1993 and the corresponding results, the Congress of the United States has refused to accept and implement as permanent and binding the definition of Commonwealth that was presented to the voters in 1993. As a result, we must establish a process based on options defined in such a way that both Congress and the American citizens of Puerto Rico recognize that a choice based upon perpetuating the lack of political suffrage and the subordination to the plenary powers of Congress under the Territorial Clause does not represent the best interests of the residents of Puerto Rico nor the rest of the United States.

The final, permanent status of Puerto Rico should be consistent with the democratic principles of freedom, human rights and the

goals of political, economic and social development that constitute the legacy of a century in which the political status of Puerto Rico has evolved within the flexibility allowed under the American constitutional framework. Although historical forces have caused the ongoing evolution of Puerto Rico towards self-determination to be delayed at sometimes and accelerated at others, now is the time to take the final step. This historic moment requires the adoption of measures that are carefully pondered yet decisive, in order to solve the political status of Puerto Rico by the beginning of a new century and a new millennium.

In 1998 Puerto Rico must not complete one hundred years of colonialism under the American flag without at least being in an irreversible, inevitable process of decolonization.

Be it Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico:

Section 1.—To request of the One Hundred Fifth Congress and the President of the United States of America to respond to the democratic aspirations of the American citizens of Puerto Rico, in order to achieve a means of guaranteeing the prompt decolonization of Puerto Rico through a plebiscite sponsored by the Federal Government, to be held no later than 1998.

Section 2.—It is hereby ordered that this Concurrent Resolution be delivered to all members of the Congress of the United States of America, to the President, the Hon. William J. Clinton, and to the Secretary General of the United States.

Section 3.—The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate of Puerto Rico are hereby authorized to designate a Special Joint Committee made up of legislators from the three political parties of Puerto Rico, for the sole purpose of personally delivering the text of this Concurrent Resolution to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro-Tempore and the Majority Leader of the Senate, and to the leaders of the Minority delegations of the Congress.

Section 4.—This Concurrent Resolution shall take effect immediately after its approval.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT C. GRAVES,
A FOUNDER OF THE NATIONAL
MARROW DONOR PROGRAM

HON. C.W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 1997

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I report to my colleagues the death of Robert C. Graves, D.V.M., who was a founder and the first chairman of the board of the National Marrow Donor Program.

Dr. Graves, who died February 13, 1997, at his home in Fort Collins, CO, was one of the most unique people I have ever been associated with during my service in Congress. A veterinarian and rancher, he was a colorful and persuasive individual who decided our Nation needed a national registry of potential bone marrow donors. He worked tirelessly to create such a registry that today saves lives every day.

He will be forever remembered for his work to help establish the National Marrow Donor Program. He was spurred onward in his drive to establish a national registry by his daughter Laura, who received the first unrelated marrow