

153. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on rollcall No. 152 and "nay" on rollcall No. 153.

PLEBISCITES ON THE STATEHOOD QUESTION FOR PUERTO RICO

HON. JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 17, 2013

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege to visit Puerto Rico three times over the years and have enjoyed many visits and meetings with citizens and officials of Puerto Rico when they have come to Washington. I believe that Puerto Rico is a beautiful island, but more importantly it has many wonderful people.

I have been involved in the issue of statehood for Puerto Rico for many years. While I love Puerto Rico and its people, I do not believe any place should become another state unless an overwhelming majority of its citizens support statehood. This is certainly not the case in Puerto Rico at this time. In fact, support for statehood in Puerto Rico has consistently remained at around less than half the population.

I appreciate very much the contributions of Puerto Rico and its citizens to our Country, and I especially admire and respect the service of many Puerto Ricans in the U.S. military.

I hope that the U.S. and Puerto Rico continue to have the closest possible ties. When the economy of Puerto Rico is strong, trade with the U.S. increases creating jobs in both places. What is good for the U.S. is generally also good for Puerto Rico, and vice versa.

I am always willing to consider and occasionally even support the right of the citizens of Puerto Rico to have referenda or plebiscites on the statehood question. It would be foolish and too expensive to have such a vote every year, but certainly I would not object to having such a vote once every few years.

However, my main goal would be to make sure that such a plebiscite be conducted in the fairest way possible. I, and many, many others, felt that the most recent plebiscite was skewed in a way to tilt the election toward statehood.

Now, I am told both the House of Representatives and Senate of Puerto Rico have passed a resolution stating that the plebiscite held on November 6, 2012 portrayed a false majority in favor of statehood and prevented an accurate vote on the option of commonwealth status.

I want to make absolutely sure that any future plebiscite on the question of statehood be conducted in the fairest way possible and certainly not in a way biased toward any particular outcome.

I want to help do everything possible so that everyone can work together to help foster economic growth for those of us in the 50 states, as well as for our friends, the citizens of Puerto Rico.

THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF PUERTO RICO COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO

THE CAPITOL

WE, EDUARDO BHATIA-GAUTIER, PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, AND JAIME R. PERELLÓ-BORRÁS, SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

CERTIFY

That the Senate of Puerto Rico and the House of Representatives of Puerto Rico approved in final vote Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 24, introduced by Messrs. Nadal-Power and Rosa-Rodríguez and Co-sponsors Messrs. Fas-Alzamora, Tirado-Rivera, Bhatia-Gautier, Dalmau-Santiago, Torres-Torres; Mmes. López-León, González-López; Messrs. Nieves-Pérez, Pereira-Castillo, Rivera-Filomeno, Rodríguez-González, Rodríguez-Otero, Rodríguez-Valle, Ruiz-Nieves, Suárez-Cáceres, and Vargas-Morales and that the same reads as follows:

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To inform the President and the Congress of the United States on the results of the plebiscite held on November 6, 2012, and support the request of the President of the United States of America for Congress to appropriate \$2.5 million for the State Elections Commission of Puerto Rico for a congressionally-sponsored plebiscite after conducting the appropriate voter education campaign, which incorporates all options, including the enhanced Commonwealth, based on the principles of fairness and equality; to authorize the disbursement of funds; and for other purposes.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

On November 6, 2012 a plebiscite was held in Puerto Rico along with the general elections. The results of such plebiscite were inconclusive because none of the options on Puerto Rico's political status received a majority of the votes. Said plebiscite consisted of two separate questions, formulated by the preceding pro-statehood government administration, which favored statehood for Puerto Rico, in order to portray a false majority in favor of statehood and prevent such formula from competing against the Commonwealth option, which had been favored by the people of Puerto Rico in all previously-held plebiscites.

The results were the following: to the first question which asked voters whether or not Puerto Rico should maintain its current form of political status, nine hundred seventy thousand nine hundred ten (970,910), that is, fifty-one point seven percent (51.7%) of the people voted "NO"; whereas eight hundred twenty-eight thousand seventy-seven (828,077), that is, forty-four point one percent (44.1%) of the people voted "YES." However, a total of sixty-seven thousand two hundred sixty-seven (67,267) voters cast a blank ballot, which accounted for three point six percent (3.6%) of voters.

The second question asked voters to choose from options that excluded the current political status. Statehood received eight hundred thirty-four thousand one hundred ninety-one (834,191), or forty-four point four percent (44.4%) of the votes cast; Sovereign Free Associated State received four hundred fifty-four thousand seven hundred sixty-eight (454,768), or twenty-four point three percent (24.3%) of the votes cast; and Independence received seventy four thousand eight hundred ninety-five (74,895), or four percent (4%) of the votes cast. However, this second question received a total of four hundred ninety-eight thousand six hundred four (498,604) blank votes, which accounted for twenty-six point five percent (26.5%) of the votes cast. These results should not surprise us, since the pre-

ceding Legislative Assembly approved the plebiscite disregarding the procedural and substantive consensus required to legitimize any plebiscite held.

The Party that supported the Commonwealth option, which was the political opposition at the time, objected this process arguing that it was contrary to the provisions of H.R. 2499, as amended and approved by the United States House of Representatives, which included the Commonwealth among the options in the second question. Moreover, it stated that the process had also been criticized by the White House because it was designed with the intent to conceal the true expression of the people of Puerto Rico.

Commonwealth supporters employed two methods to express their opposition to the plebiscite as designed. On the one hand, the Governing Board of the Party supporting the Commonwealth option adopted a resolution asking voters to protest the process by casting a blank ballot. On the other hand, a significant number of pro-Commonwealth leaders openly conducted campaigns in favor of the Sovereign Free Associated State option.

There is no doubt that the voters who wish to express their dissatisfaction with the proposals or the candidates in a ballot, traditionally do so by spoiling their ballots, casting a blank ballot, or voting for a fictional character.

If the United States Congress wants to know the amount of Puerto Rican voters against statehood for Puerto Rico, the blank ballots should be taken into account because such votes clearly express the intent of voters not favoring that option. Thus, it should be understood that votes cast in favor of statehood did not exceed forty-four point four percent (44.4%), which shows a two percent (2%) decrease in the historical peak such option achieved in 1998. In other words, fifty-five point six percent (55.6%) of Puerto Rican voters rejected Statehood in the 2012 plebiscite.

In 1998, the pro-statehood party had also designed a unilateral and exclusionary plebiscite; nonetheless, voters had the option to vote for "None of the Above." The "None of the Above" option received fifty point three percent (50.3%) of the votes cast, followed by Statehood and Independence, which received forty-six point five percent (46.5%) and two point five percent (2.5%) of the votes cast, respectively. The results of the 1998 plebiscite were consistent with those of the 1993 plebiscite, in which the Commonwealth option received forty-eight point six percent (48.6%) of the votes cast, whereas Statehood and Independence received forty-six point three percent (46.3%) and four point four percent (4.4%) of the votes cast, respectively. The only other event of this kind held since the establishment of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1952, took place in 1967. In the 1967 plebiscite, the Commonwealth received sixty point three percent (60.3%) of the votes cast, while Statehood received thirty-nine percent (39%).

Unfortunately, the preceding government administration in Puerto Rico whose term ended in December 2012, failed to sponsor a process that included the recommendations of the Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status appointed by President Barack Obama. Such Task Force proposed—on the Report released in March 2011—various methods to ask Puerto Ricans about their political status in a manner that is fair for the supporters of all options. Furthermore, the preceding government administration missed the opportunity to address the issue of Puerto Rico's political status in an inclusive and responsible manner.

On April 10, 2013, President Barack Obama included in the budget proposal for the Fiscal Year 2014, an appropriation of \$2.5 million

to the State Elections Commission in order to conduct a voter education campaign and a plebiscite which would include all constitutionally viable status options. This action taken by the President of the United States demonstrates that the plebiscite designed by the preceding government administration lacks all legitimacy or credibility before the government of the United States of America.

In light of the history of the imposed and exclusionary plebiscites held in Puerto Rico, that only attest to our people's division with regard to this issue, it is necessary to inform the President and the Congress of the United States about the true results of the plebiscite held on November 6, 2012.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY OF PUERTO RICO:

Section I.—To inform the President and the Congress of the United States on the results of the plebiscite held on November 6, 2012, and support the request of the President of the United States of America for Congress to appropriate \$2.5 million for the State Elections Commission of Puerto Rico for a congressionally-sponsored plebiscite after conducting the appropriate voter education campaign, which incorporates all options, including the enhanced Commonwealth, based on the principles of fairness and equality; to authorize the disbursement of funds; and for other purposes.

Section 2.—The results of the 2012 plebiscite were the following: in the first question, which asked voters whether or not Puerto Rico should continue to have its current form of political status, the "NO" option received fifty-three point nine percent (53.9%) of the votes cast, whereas the "YES" option received forty-six percent (46%). The results of the second question, which asked voters to choose from the options that did not include the current status, were the following: the statehood option received forty-four point four percent (44.4%) of the votes cast (834,191); the "sovereign free associated state" received twenty-four point three percent (24.3%) of the votes cast (454,768); the independence option received four percent (4%) of the votes cast (74,895), and blank ballots accounted for twenty-six point five percent (26.5%) of the votes cast (498,604).

Section 3.—The foregoing shows that the representations made before the United States Congress stating that the statehood option was favored by the majority of Puerto Ricans, does not accurately reflect the results of the plebiscite on Puerto Rico's status held on November 6, 2012.

Section 4.—A copy of this Concurrent Resolution shall be delivered to the President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of State of the United States, to all the Members of the 113th United States Congress, as well as to all pertinent government and non-governmental organizations, human rights organizations, and the local, national, and international media, among others.

Section 5.—A certified copy of this Concurrent Resolution shall be translated into English and delivered by the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives of Puerto Rico to the members of the United States Congress.

Section 6.—This Concurrent Resolution shall take effect immediately after its approval.

In witness whereof we hereunto sign and affix the Seal of the Senate and the House of Representatives of Puerto Rico. Issued this Tuesday, 14th of May of 2013, at our offices at the Capitol Building, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

THE DEEPEST OF THE DEEP IN
HONOR OF AN AMERICAN HERO
SSG TRAVIS MILLS BRAVO
TROOP 4/73 CAVALRY 82ND AIR-
BORNE THE UNITED STATES
ARMY

HON. TIM WALBERG

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 17, 2013

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor to recognize SSG Travis Mills of Bravo Troop 4/73 Cavalry 82nd Airborne, of The United States Army. An American hero if ever there was one. On April 10, 2012, while out on patrol with his troops in Mialand Province Afghanistan he almost lost his life during an IED explosion. Travis is the fourth Wounded Warrior to lose all of his limbs. He is known for leading his men in combat, where they go he goes! And since arriving at Walter Reed Hospital, he has inspired all of his fellow wounded warriors, spending many hours up on the ward and throughout the complex leading them to recovery. His can do attitude and great sense of humor makes you proud to be an American. Any parent would be proud to call him his or her son. Also his wonderful wife Kelsey, who adds new meaning to that song "Stand by your man". And their beautiful child Chloe, have given Travis so much to live for! I submit this poem penned in his honor by Albert Carey Caswell.

THE DEEPEST OF THE DEEP

The . . .
The Deepest . . .
The Deepest of The Deep!
And on that morning Travis when you
awoke . . .
Oh what to you, your fine heart so
spoke . . .
While, lying there without much hope!
As when you so realized,
that this was not a bad dream . . .
and somehow you must so find a way to so
cope!
As the tears rolled down upon your most
courageous face,
as the Angels up in Heaven so too cried and
prayed . . .
and to you so spoke!
As somehow all in that darkness of most evil
war,
Travis you so found the hope!
All with but your most amazing grace,
to somehow to somehow so cope!
And to so accept God's Will,
as the tears ran down your most brilliant
face!
As it was your faith Travis,
that which you so invoked!
As you so came to such a place!
Where only,
but The Deepest of The Deep can so face!
And for all of them BRAVO,
one day heaven so awaits!
That which,
so helped you to wipe all of those tears
away . . .
as you so began your most heroic climb on
that day!
All in what your fine heart and soul,
so had to say!
All in what Travis,
you so gave!
The Deepest of The Deep!
To so fight on,
but to so live another day!
As all around you we'd so weep!
As we so looked upon your most courageous
face,
and into your most beautiful of all eyes so
very deep!

As there we so saw something,
something so very precious and oh so very
sweet!
Something,
that to this day wise men still so seek!
Was but,
The Deepest!
Was But The Deepest of The Deep!
All in what so comes from within ones heart,
that which so heroically so beats!
And all within ones soul,
so very deep!
Is but The Deepest of The Deep!
As it was there Travis,
that you so chose to live or die!
As it was there Travis,
all in that hospital bed as you so lie . . .
As your fine wife so began to cry!
As your family so asked why?
As when,
your soul so took flight!
As you were Airborne,
2nd to none!
To so lift us all up,
and cast your most heroic light!
As once before Travis,
you so stood so tall before us almost like a
God!
As now without arms and legs,
an even greater person we now saw!
As we so began to cry!
Get up or give in,
for only this you could so decide!
As Travis you so dug in deep!
To so become one of,
The Deepest of The Deep!
As somehow Travis you so kept hope alive!
All on your most heroic path,
as you so began your climb!
As soon,
we all so realized . . .
that you were now more than a man!
As this battle you would so win!
Uncommon Courage,
something so very brilliant that can only
come from so deep within!
Is but The Deepest of The Deep My Friends!
As Travis you so chose life,
as all around us you'd so cast your light!
As all for Chloe your most beautiful little
child,
and Kelsey your most devoted loving
wife . . .
As you would take that hill!
As you would so win that fight!
For you Travis,
you are Pure!
Pure Michigan,
for that's so for sure!
As day by day . . .
And night by night!
Upon, this world you would so cast your
light!
As the mountains you would so climb!
For we all have valleys,
into which we may fall!
But, all in that moment of truth . . .
will we so be the ones so standing tall?
To somehow rise up above it all!
And come out of all of that darkness,
to become a true champion and so answer
courage's call!
When against all odd's,
upon our hearts it all so depends!
As you Travis so remind us all,
of that one fine thing!
Of what The Deepest of The Deep Can So
Bring!
But, what so lies all in our such hearts of
courage full!
Would we so be the ones to so find such
strength,
all in such darkness to so stand tall?
All in these our darkest of days of nights,
to so bring such tears to the Angels eyes!
Bravo!
As Travis,
your fine heart went Airborne!