

Nation's movement to an all-volunteer military after the Vietnam War.

With fewer than 1 percent of our Nation's population on active military duty, the gap between those who have served in uniform and those who have not has never been greater. These differences in life experiences have led to misguided perceptions of how each group views the other. The widening of this "civilian-military gap" makes it less likely that our servicemembers and veterans will properly reintegrate back into our society, and less likely that our best and brightest will pursue military service. As a society, we must address the problem. If we can't care for the service men and woman and their families who have made so many sacrifices on our behalf, then holidays such as Memorial Day end up having little relevance. One veteran I recently met with said to me, "I fought proudly for my country in Afghanistan, but when I came back I didn't feel like I came back. I'm still waiting to feel like I came back." No American who has worn the uniform of this country should have to feel this way.

Memorial Day is a day we Americans hold close to our hearts because in the sometimes hectic pace of our daily lives, we can forget just how fortunate we are. Memorial Day reminds us. Throughout this holiday weekend we will see many American flags and flowers adorning the graves of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our Nation. I will especially remember in my thoughts and prayers the 127 Marylanders who have been killed in our most recent conflicts, and I will remind myself that our freedom isn't free. And I will remember that the best way to honor their ultimate sacrifice is to ensure that we are unwavering in our support to care for those who do return to us wounded, ill, and injured. This Memorial Day, let us affirm our commitment to those who have returned from the fields of battle as the best way to honor their fallen comrades.

#### PUERTO RICO

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, it is important for the United States to continue its efforts to promote a close relationship with Puerto Rico and its citizens. That includes supporting a fair and democratic process for Puerto Ricans on the perennial and controversial issue of statehood.

I commend Puerto Rico's new Governor Alejandro Garcia Padilla on his work to tackle the current challenges facing the island, particularly on the economic front. Congress has long supported reciprocity between Puerto Rico and the United States, with very positive results. When the Puerto Rican economy flourishes, trade with the United States increases, helping promote job creation here at home.

I am disappointed the most recent budget proposal submitted to Congress by the White House recommends \$2.5

million in fiscal year 2014 to conduct yet another referendum on Puerto Rico's political status. Allocating U.S. taxpayer dollars for this purpose is wasteful and unnecessary, since a plebiscite was just held in Puerto Rico last November on this very question.

The vote on Election Day specifically called for Puerto Ricans to express their views on the island's political status. Its backers sought to show that popular support exists for turning Puerto Rico into a State. But it is widely acknowledged that the ballot was not developed in a fair and inclusive manner. It instead presented statehood alternatives with a predetermined result in mind, to force Puerto Ricans toward an option they have rejected time and again, and to stack the deck in favor of statehood.

The first part of the ballot asked whether or not Puerto Rican voters wanted to continue their territorial status. The second portion then provided three different non-territorial alternatives: statehood, sovereign free associated state, or independence. Keeping the island's current Commonwealth status was not even listed as an option in the second round.

As expected, a slim majority—nearly 51.7 percent of the 1.9 million who voted—opted for changing the current status. However, in response to the second question, 834,191 voters chose statehood, 498,604 left the second question blank, 454,768 selected sovereign free associated state, and 74,895 favored independence. Any way you slice it, 1,028,267—or nearly 55 percent—of the Puerto Ricans who traveled to the polls voted for options other than statehood.

As Congresswoman NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ, the first woman of Puerto Rican heritage elected to the United States House of Representatives, correctly pointed out: "Casting a blank ballot is part of traditional form of objecting to an unfair process in Puerto Rican political history." In accordance with this tradition, the Commonwealth Party in Puerto Rico adopted a resolution calling on Puerto Rican voters to protest last November's plebiscite process by casting blank ballots.

When you include the nearly half a million voters who left the second question on the ballot blank, it is clear—despite the claims of some statehood proponents—that a majority of voters do not support statehood for Puerto Rico. In fact, more than 1 million, or nearly 55 percent, of Puerto Rican voters who participated in the plebiscite actually demonstrated support for something other than statehood.

A concurrent resolution was adopted last week by the legislature in Puerto Rico stating that the plebiscite on November 6, 2012, portrayed a false majority in favor of statehood and prevented an accurate vote on the option of Commonwealth status. I ask unanimous consent to insert into the RECORD the text of that resolution.

#### 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 about the results of the plebiscite held on November 6, 2012, and support the request of the President of the United States of America for the Congress to appropriate \$2.5 million to the State Elections Commission for a federally-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 that received a majority of 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 that had been favored by the people of Puerto Rico in all previously-held plebiscites.

The results were the following: the first question 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 (454,708), 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, such 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 preceding 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. It also argued that the process was contrary to the provisions of H.R. 2499, as amended, 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 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. 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 the ballot, traditionally do so by spoiling their ballots, casting a blank ballot, or voting for a fictional character.

If the United States Congress wishes 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 against statehood. 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 it achieved in 1998. In other words, fifty-five point six percent (55.6%) of Puerto Rican voters rejected statehood in the 2012 plebiscite.

Previously, 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 would include the recommendations of the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status appointed by President Barack Obama. Such Task Force proposed—on a 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, it also failed 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. The action taken by the President of the United States shows that the plebiscite designed by the preceding government administration lacks legitimacy or credibility before the government of the United States of America.

In light of the history of imposed and exclusionary plebiscites 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 1.—To inform the President and the Congress of the United States about the results of the plebiscite held on November 6, 2012, and support the request of the President of the United States of America for the Congress to appropriate \$2.5 million to the State Elections Commission for a federally-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 point four 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.

EDUARDO BHATIA-GAUTIER,

*President of Senate.*

JAIME R. PERELLÓ-BORRÁS,

*Speaker of House of Representatives.*

## TRIBUTE TO GEORGE W. SCOTT

Mr. DURBIN. I would like to take a few minutes to recognize a true American hero from my home State of Illinois. George W. Scott of Williamsville, IL, was an airman in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II and is a survivor of a group of airmen who were imprisoned at the Buchenwald Concentration Camp by the Nazi government.

Many people have heard of Buchenwald, one of the first and one of the largest concentration camps in Germany. But few people have heard the story of the Lost Airmen of Buchenwald, of which George was one.

In 1944, George was flying a Douglas A-20 Havoc aircraft barely 500 feet off the ground over France when he was shot down by German anti-aircraft guns. He was able to escape the aircraft before it crashed, and he escaped capture for a short time. George hid in bushes and in barns. He even milked a few cows for nourishment. He was fortunate to be taken in by a French family who provided food and shelter. But soon after, he was discovered by the Nazi patrols scouring France for resistance fighters or Allied soldiers and airmen.

George was transported to Buchenwald Concentration Camp in Germany, where he joined 168 Allied airmen from six countries. These airmen were not afforded the Prisoner of War protections outlined in The Hague and Geneva Conventions. Instead, they were classified as "Terrorflieger," or terror flyers, considered criminals and spies, and were not given a trial.

At Buchenwald, the conditions were unimaginable. Many prisoners starved to death within 3 months of imprisonment. Prisoners were beaten, scarcely fed, and forced to work grueling shifts. But the Allied airmen organized themselves into units based on their nationality, appointed commanding officers, and instilled discipline and order. This self-imposed military hierarchy helped them to build morale, work as a team, and increase their chances of survival.

But those chances remained low. George and his fellow airmen were scheduled to be executed at Buchenwald on the orders of Adolf Hitler. Facing their impending execution, the airmen managed to pass a note detailing their captivity in the camp to the nearby Luftwaffe. After visiting the camp, German Luftwaffe officers demanded that the airmen be transferred to their custody. George and his fellow airmen were transferred to a POW camp and liberated when the Russian Army reached the camp in 1945.

It is a remarkable story and one that the U.S. Government kept quiet after the war. Yet George and his fellow airmen deserve immense credit and long-overdue recognition for their immeasurable contribution to the Allied war effort and their unimaginable pain and suffering.

When asked how George managed, at 19 years old, to survive in the unbearable conditions of Buchenwald, he says