

State of Vermont

House of Representatives



Montpelier, Vermont

Joint House Resolution

J.R.H. 9

Joint resolution urging Congress to support statehood for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

Offered by: Representative Copeland Hanzas of Bradford

Whereas, on July 25, 1898, during the Spanish–American War, U.S. military forces invaded the Spanish colony of Puerto Rico, and

Whereas, pursuant to the Treaty of December 1898, which ended the conflict, Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the United States, and

Whereas, the Constitution of Puerto Rico, adopted in 1952, resulted in the jurisdiction's designation as a commonwealth, and

Whereas, in 1917, the Jones–Shafroth Act granted Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship, but unless they move to the mainland they are unable to vote in U.S. presidential elections, and

Whereas, despite its having a population of over 3 million, representation for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in the U.S. House of Representatives is restricted to a single Resident Commissioner, who, unlike the representatives of the states, is prohibited from voting on legislation on the floor of the House, and the Commonwealth has no representation in the U.S. Senate, and

Whereas, discussion of possible statehood for the Commonwealth has occurred since the 1930s, and

Whereas, Puerto Ricans' dissatisfaction with the federal response to the massive devastation and approximately 3,000 deaths resulting from Hurricane Maria in 2017 and the still-unsettled bankruptcy of the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority have intensified the debate surrounding possible statehood, and

Whereas, although Puerto Ricans pay federal payroll taxes, their access to the services those taxes finance, including Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, and the Earned Income Tax Credit is not equivalent to the extent afforded in the states, and

Whereas, in 2012 and 2017, a majority of the voters in Puerto Rico favored a political status other than the Commonwealth, and a majority of this subset of the electorate supported statehood, and

Whereas, in a November 2020 referendum, 52.52 percent of voters in Puerto Rico supported Puerto Rico's immediate admittance as the nation's 51st state, and

Whereas, in March 2021, U.S. Rep. Darren Soto of Florida and Puerto Rico's Resident Commissioner Jenniffer Gonzalez introduced H.1522, the Puerto Rico Statehood Admissions Act, and Senator Martin Heinrich of New Mexico has introduced S.780, a comparable bill, in the Senate, and

Whereas, statehood would provide the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico equal legal and political status with the 50 states, including full voting representation in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly urges Congress to support statehood for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the U.S. Resident Commissioner for Puerto Rico and the Vermont Congressional Delegation.