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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Jan. 6, 1977

1977 JAN 6 PM 5 25

TO: JIM CANNON

FROM: DEAN OVERMAN

Photo Rico



MASTER

A B I L L

To provide the basis for ~~eventual~~ Statehood of Puerto Rico, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as "The Puerto Rico Statehood Act" ^{6/19/77}

Findings and Declaration

Sec. 1. The Congress finds, declares and recognizes:

That the President of the United States has ~~offered~~ ^{proposed}

~~the status of Statehood to the people of Puerto Rico, and~~
^{be given the opportunity to achieve statehood}

That it is the sense of the Congress of the United States that the people of Puerto Rico should be able to achieve the status of Statehood under the Constitution of the United States if they should so desire; and

^{any} That the President and the Congress recognize that ~~the~~ change from the status of Commonwealth to Statehood for Puerto Rico requires the resolution of complex issues and has many implications both for the people of Puerto Rico and for the United States, and the people of Puerto Rico should be fully apprised of such before being asked freely to express their wishes on ^{then consider and} ~~changing~~ ^{the people} their status from Commonwealth to Statehood.

Definitions

Sec. 2. As used in this Act, the term --

(a) "Commission" means the Puerto Rico Statehood Study Commission;



(b) "Puerto Rico" means the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico;

(c) "President" means the President of the United States;

(d) "Governor" means the Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; and

(e) "Congress" means the Congress of the United States.

Establishment of the Commission

Sec. 3. There is hereby established a Commission to be called the "Puerto Rico Statehood Study Commission."

Purpose of the Commission

Sec. 4. The purpose of the Commission is to develop a comprehensive report, ~~together with recommendations~~, on all the issues and implications involved in changing the status of Puerto Rico from that of a Commonwealth to that of a State of the Union so that the people of Puerto Rico can be ~~fully~~ advised ^{by} of the Commission's report ~~and recommendations~~ before they are asked freely to express their desires on the question of Statehood for Puerto Rico.

Insert § 8, Duties - Re-number as § 5
Final Report #59 as § 6

7.
Sec. 5. The Commission shall submit its final report to the President of the United States, to the Governor of Puerto Rico, and to the Congress of the United States within five (5) years from the date this Act becomes law. The Commission shall cease to exist ninety (90) days after submission of the final report.



Composition and Appointment of the Commission

Sec. 6(a) The Commission shall be composed as follows:

(1) ^{Five (5)} ~~Four (4)~~ members of the Commission shall be appointed by the President of the United States and five (5) members shall be appointed by the Governor of Puerto Rico. The members of the Commission appointed by the President shall be appointed within sixty (60) days after the Governor of Puerto Rico has appointed his last member.

(2) Selection of the members shall take into consideration, and be based upon, expertise and knowledge in the fields of law, socio-economics, and related disciplines pertinent to the issues and implications involved in Statehood for Puerto Rico.

(b) The members of the Commission shall, at their first meeting, elect from among themselves a permanent Chairman and Vice Chairman by simple majority vote of those voting. In the event that the members do not elect a Chairman or a Vice Chairman at their first meeting, the President, after consultation with the Governor, shall designate the Chairman or the the Vice Chairman as may be appropriate.

(c) Vacancies in the membership of the Commission shall not affect the power of the remaining members to execute the functions of the Commission and shall be filled in the same manner as in the case of the original appointment.

(d) ^{Six (6)} ~~Five (5)~~ members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum but a smaller number, as determined by the Commission, may hold hearings or conduct study missions.



(e) Officials or employees of the Executive, Legislative or Judicial branches of the Federal or Puerto Rico Governments who are members of the Commission shall serve without compensation in addition to their regular ^(salary) pay, but they may be reimbursed in accordance with applicable Federal laws and regulations for travel, subsistence, and other necessary expenses incurred by them in the performance of duties vested in the Commission.

(f) All other members of the Commission shall receive compensation for each day such members are engaged in the actual performance of duties vested in the Commission at a daily rate not to exceed the rate specified for Level IV of the Executive Schedule under Section 5315 of Title 5 of the United States Code. Each such member may be reimbursed for travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, in accordance with applicable Federal laws and regulations.

Staff of the Commission

Sec. 7(a) The Commission may, by record vote of a majority of the Commission members, appoint, without regard to the provisions of the Civil Service Laws and the Classification Act of 1949, an Executive Director of the Commission and a General Counsel. The compensation of the Executive Director and the General Counsel shall be set by the Commission at rates not to exceed those that now or hereafter are prescribed for the highest rate for Grade 18 of the General Schedule under Section 5332 of Title 5 of the United States Code. The Executive Director is



authorized to appoint, without regard to the provisions of the Civil Service Laws and the Classification Act of 1949, such professional staff members and clerical assistants as the Commission shall determine are necessary to perform its functions under this Act. The Executive Director shall prescribe the duties and responsibilities of such staff members and fix their compensation at rates not in excess of those now or hereafter prescribed in the General Schedule for Civil Service employees under Section 5332 of Title 5 of the United States Code having similar duties and responsibilities.

(b) In carrying out any of its functions under this Act, the Commission is authorized to utilize without reimbursement, the services, information, facilities and personnel of the Executive departments and agencies of the Government of the United States, and the Executive Director is authorized to procure expert and consultant services in accordance with the provisions of Section 3109 of Title 5 of the United States Code.

§ Duties of the Commission

Sec. 8. It shall be the duty of the Commission in formulating the final report, ~~together with recommendations~~, to make comprehensive investigations and studies to determine the effect of Statehood on the political, economic, and cultural status and aspirations of the people of Puerto Rico. These investigations and studies shall include, but not be limited to:

(a) all economic issues that relate to the status of Statehood for Puerto Rico;

(b) the jurisdictional limits of Puerto Rico, including rights or interests to the natural resources therein;

(c) the effect of any necessary changes in internal revenue laws that may be applicable to Puerto Rico, including levels of revenue sharing, customs and duty collections and related questions;

(d) ~~Fair Labor Standards~~, ^{Health} Welfare, ~~Social Services~~, and ~~Education~~;

(e) questions of a cultural nature, including the use of Spanish as the official language.

(f) possible transfer of Federal property to Puerto Rico; ^{under Statehood} and

(g) the general question of the applicability of the United States Constitution and Federal laws to Puerto Rico. ^{under Statehood}

⁶ Powers of the Commission

Sec. ~~8~~. (a) In carrying out its duties under this Act the Commission is authorized to hold such hearings and take such testimony, ~~to~~ make such investigations, ~~and~~ conduct such studies, and ~~to~~ make such expenditures as ⁱⁿ its discretion ^{it} deems advisable to carry out the purposes of this Act.

(b) The Commission is authorized to secure from any department, agency, or instrumentality of the Executive branch of the Government any information it deems necessary to carry out its functions under this resolution and each such department, agency, or instrumentality is authorized and directed to furnish such information to the Commission and to conduct such studies



Authorization

Sec. 13. There is hereby authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act.



TO: JIM CANNON
FROM: SAM HALPER
SUBJECT: PUERTO RICO

In going over this material I found a significant number of instances showing that presidents have not been reluctant to involve themselves, at times vigorously, in the issues dealing with the governors and the status of Puerto Rico. I recommend this as possibly being of assistance to you and I am giving this to you first:

McKinley. March 1900 urges Governor Allen, the first civilian governor, to prepare the people of Puerto Rico as soon as possible for statehood. [Note: This entry is the only one that should be re-checked].

Theodore Roosevelt. Following visit to island in 1906, argues that Puerto Ricans should have been granted full citizenship. Urges an elected upper house in addition to the elected lower house already granted under the Foraker Act of 1900. On the heels of this the Puerto Rican legislature immediately petitions Congress for citizenship.

Taft, 1909: "We have gone somewhat too fast in the extension of political power to them for their own good."

1912: "I believe the aim to be striven for is the fullest possible allowance of legal and fiscal self-government, with American citizenship as the bond between us."

April 15, 1912: "I am in favor of granting American citizenship to the people of Puerto Rico. I believe that both as a matter of sentiment and practical justice they should be made citizens. I take it as a happy sign that no one seems to be associating the idea of citizenship with statehood."



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② 1916 Message to Congress: "The present laws governing the island and regulating the rights and privileges of its people are not just."

③ 1917 State of the Union Message to Congress lists among its top three legislative priorities liberalization of Puerto Rico's government.

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① Franklin Roosevelt visits island July 1934 and then in December this shrewd politician sends through a freshman senator from a minority party (Luis Munoz Marin, whom he liked), a message promising economic "reconstruction at the earliest possible moment" which Munoz reads over the radio to loud speakers in every village plaza on the island.



3 In 1941, he appoints as governor Rex Tugell, well-known for his enthusiasm for the legislative program of Munoz's people's Democratic Party.

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February 2, 1948, Truman again urges in a message to Congress that the people of Puerto Rico be allowed plebiscite to choose their own form of government. Later that month he visits Puerto Rico, receives enthusiastic reception.

2 April 22, 1952 sends message to Congress on Public Law 600, which was not yet gratified, calling it "an inspiration."

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Kennedy. July 1962 Governor Junoz write the President asking for status plebiscite to "perfect" the commonwealth principle. Vice President Lyndon Johnson travels to San Juan for the 10th anniversary of commonwealth and delivers Kennedy's reply: "I am aware that the relationship is not perfect. I welcome your statement that the people of Puerto Rico are about to begin consideration of this."



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SUBJECT: Puerto Rico and the U.S.: A Chronology

November 1897: Spain grants autonomy to Puerto Rico and the island -- after nearly 400 years as a Spanish colony -- is on the verge of a new era with a promise of more freedom than ever before in its history. For Puerto Ricans the grant of autonomy becomes a yardstick of liberality which the U.S. -- the next occupying power -- must match or exceed.

July 1898: As the autonomous government officially begins to function, at dawn July 25, three months after the start of the Spanish American War, 16,000 U.S. troops begin landing on Puerto Rico's south coast and in 17 days the island is taken at a cost of 4 Americans killed, 17 wounded. "It wasn't much of a war," says Roughrider, Teddy Roosevelt. "A picnic," says newsman Richard Harding Davis, "a fete des fleurs." July 29 U.S. Commander General Nelson A. Miles, the old Indian fighter, promises the Puerto Rican people "We have ... come ... to bestow upon you the immunities and blessings of the liberal institutions of our government." The Puerto Rican's welcomed the Americans.

April 12, 1900: Congress enacts the Foraker Act making Puerto Rico a U.S. territory. Its governors, judges, auditors, education commissioners and all department heads are to be appointed by Washington or by U.S. authorities. The Puerto Ricans get to elect the Insular House of Representatives but the 11 members of the senior legislative branch -- an executive council -- are all to be appointed by the President. (Six of them must be Americans).

The island gets a Resident Commissioner to speak for it in the House but has no vote there. The Act directs itself to "the people of Puerto Rico," leaving the inhabitants without citizenship of any sort. However deficient politically by Puerto Rican standards, it is fair by economic standards. Puerto Rico shares the U.S. market and its tariff system, a common currency, etc., with the island free of U.S. taxes and all Puerto Rican taxes collected on the island and all duties on foreign goods entering Puerto Rico reverting to the island treasury. To halt U.S. corporations gobbling up of Puerto Rico's farmland, the corporations are legally

limited to owning 500 acres, a restriction they promptly evade.

1904: Cashing in on the bitterness of the Foraker Act, the new, tough-minded Union Party takes power in Puerto Rico and holds it for the next 20 years. The platform says the Party will be automatically dissolved when Puerto Rico comes to be constituted under an acceptable definite status defined either as statehood, independence or self-rule under the U.S. flag. (This is the first time that independence is suggested as a possible status).

1909: Resentful under the Foraker Act and U.S. obtuseness, the Puerto Rico lower House contrives an attention-getting crisis. It knowingly passes bills that the U.S.-appointed executive council will reject, then in the last hour of the last day of the session prepares a memorial to Congress and the President attacking the "unjust" organic law (Foraker Act) which makes it impossible for the people's representatives to pass the laws they desire. Finally the legislatures also tell the governor that they are adjourning without passing a budget for the coming year. Acting on a message from President Taft, Congress enacts a bill automatically carrying over the island budget of the previous year. However, the protracted debate which says the Congress is angry and defied, renews Congress' dormant acquaintance with Puerto Rican matters and plants the seeds of basic revision of the Foraker Act 8 years later.

1910: Backed by President Taft, the House passes a bill to grant Puerto Ricans citizenship on application and provides also for electing the executive council. Puerto Ricans are angered by this half loaf; Senate never gets around to the bill now or in 1912 when citizenship on application again passes the House.

1917: Strongly impelled by the incoming Democratic Administration, the Jones Act granting Puerto Ricans citizenship -- not on application but en masse -- and elected executive council (upper House) becomes law. Accomplishing this Act -- which supercedes the Foraker Act, requires two tried by President Wilson in three years. Meanwhile Puerto Rico's leading party, the Unionists, had dropped statehood as an acceptable status and moved toward independence. Mollified as they are by the Jones Act, the Puerto Ricans note there is still a veto power vested in the governor appointed from

the mainland, U.S. president, in whose election they play no part and in the U.S. Congress in which they have no vote.

1919: Puerto Rico legislature asks Congress to permit a plebiscite on status. Request dies in committee. Visiting Representative Joe Cannon addresses the Puerto Rican legislature; "Why are you worrying about statehood or independence? You will get either or both just as soon as you are ready."

1922: Union Party Chief, Antonio Barcelo for the first time proposes for Puerto Rico's status the concept of the Estado Libre Asociado (The Free Associated State) imitative of the just-established Irish free state, then in the news, ELA (as the Puerto Rican's call it) would provide a "permanent indestructable bond" between the island and the U.S. Representative Phillips Campbell introduces H.R. 9995 for this purpose; it dies in committee. (Note: the Antonio Barcelo who proposed the ELA in 1922 was the grandfather of the present pro-statehood governor, Carlos Romero Barcelo, staunch opponent of the free associated state which is the dogma of the popular party and of its recent governor, Rafael Hernandez Colon, whom Romero defeated in the November 2, 1976 election.)

1928: Puerto Rican leaders persuaded Charles A. Lindberg, visiting the island on a goodwill tour, to deliver a message from the Insular Legislature to President Coolidge: "Grant us the freedom that you enjoy, for which you struggled, which you worshipped, which we deserve and you have promised us." On the heels of this, Puerto Rican leaders cabled Coolidge: "Puerto Rico feels humiliated because of the inferior conditions she is subjected to." Coolidge replies testily that Puerto Rico has received powers of government for the exercise of which its people are barely prepared." Resident Commissioner Cordova Davila responds to Coolidge by finally asking for passage of a bill for an elective governor and an investigation of economic conditions on the island.

1930: As the depression hits already poverty-stricken Puerto Rico with particular force, a militant nationalist (pro-independence) party is formed and a bitterly anti-American lawyer Pedro Albizu Campos, graduate of Harvard Law School and one-time U.S. Army officer, becomes its president. It enters the 1932 election, does poorly, afterward refuses to participate further in "colonial elections" and takes an increasingly hostile course of action that soon turns toward terrorism.

1935: Responding to the rising tide of independence talk, Senators Tydings and King state that Puerto Rico can have independence "if the people seriously desire it." Frightened, the pro Statehood Coalition, now the ruling party renews its demands for statehood and liberal reforms. In May and June 1935 the House Committee on Territories begins hearings on H.R. 1392, a statehood bill introduced by Resident Commissioner Santiago Iglesias. Opposition, e.g., Antonio Barcelo and Luis Munoz Marin, testify against the bill; it becomes clear that Puerto Rico's are hopelessly defeated on the issue and the statehood bill is shelved.

P.S. In 1898 our people welcomed the America Expeditionary forces and never, not a single shot was ever aimed at America Troops. If statehood were legislated by the Congress all Puerto Rico will embrace our fellow citizens from the mainland as our brothers in political equality under our great United States Constitution. Puerto Rico has undergone infiltration of communist influence and any delay to achieve statehood under U.S. will only play into communist hands. We have learned to love America. It is your turn now to give us a hand. Thank you and good luck! Please do not feel frustrated for we are the silent majority!

Hardy

San Juan, Puerto Rico, U.S.A.,
January 12, 1977.

Hon. Gerald Ford,
President of the United States,
Washington, D.C.

C/o James Cannon and
Ron Nessen

Dear Mr. President:

Hardy-Franco-ll

Thank you Mr. President for your proposed implementation of enabling legislation of statehood for Puerto Rico. Your points of view are basically a true reflection of the spirit and the thinking of the Puertorrican people. I am positive the local administration of Puerto Rico headed by Mr. Carlos Romero Barcelo do share your interest in statehood, only that they are bound by a pre-election promise not to actively pursue statehood. In my opinion they are not legally bound inasmuch as the opposition Popular Democratic Party principal leaders including Governors Muñoz Marín and Hernández Colón viewed the past November elections as in the form of a plebiscite and the people voted subsequently against Commonwealth Status and in favor of statehood, that following the Popular Democratic Party criteria. Governor Romero Barcelo in my opinion is plainly absolved if he openly went along with President Ford. Besides, statehood is not a partisan issue. It is an American issue, the issue of the people regardless of partisan politics.

Because our people need statehood to bring economic and political stability to all Puertorricans, as a matter of national and public necessity please proceed with your enabling proposal to make Puerto Rico our 51st State because Puerto Rico strengthens our nation at this time when communist eruptions threaten the Caribbean and our whole hemisphere. Very respectfully,

Hardy Franco
San Juan, P.R. 00914, Box 12101



From H.M. Frnk
San Juan, P.R. 00911



Messers Cannon and Nessen,
1600 Penna. Ave.,
Washington, D.C. 20510

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 13, 1977

NOTE TO MR. CANNON

Is this satisfactory for the section by
section summary you mentioned last
night?

Dean

Section by Section Summary of the Puerto Rico
Statehood Act of 1977

Statement of Purposes

- Enables the people of Puerto Rico to achieve the status of Statehood for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, if they so desire;
- Establishes a sequence of steps by which the complex issues associated with Puerto Rico's admission to the Union may be addressed in an orderly way; and
- Insures that the people of Puerto Rico would be fully aware of the merits and responsibilities of Statehood before deciding whether their Commonwealth should become a State.

Sec. 101. Establishment and Purpose of the Commission

- Establishes the Puerto Rico Statehood Commission to develop a broad understanding throughout Puerto Rico of the implications of Statehood.

Sec. 102. Duties of the Commission

- Sets forth the duties of the Commission and lists some of the issues the Commission should study.

Sec. 103. Powers of the Commission

- Authorizes the Commission to hold hearings, establish facts, conduct studies, and secure information from Federal agencies;

Sec. 104. Commission and Appointment of the Commission

- Describes the composition of the Commission: five members appointed by the President of the United

States and five members appointed by the Governor of Puerto Rico;

- Sets forth the method of selecting a Chairman, filling vacancies, selecting a quorum and determining the composition of the Commission.

Sec. 105. Staff of the Commission

- Provides for a staff and its compensation;
- Authorizes the Commission to use the facilities of the Executive Branch of the Federal government.

Sec. 106. Final Report

- Requires the Commission to submit a final report to the President, the Governor of Puerto Rico (who would make the report available to the people of Puerto Rico), the Congress and the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico;
- Provides an opportunity for additional Congressional or Presidential action concerning the terms of Puerto Rico's admission into the Union, to be made in light of the nature or content of the final report.

Sec. 107. Federal Advisory Committee Act

- Exempts the Commission from the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

Sec. 108. Use of Property, Facilities and Services

- Authorizes the Commission to purchase or rent property.

Sec. 109. Authorization

- Authorizes the appropriation of sums of money for the Commission.

Title II. Puerto Rico and Statehood

Sec. 201.

- Provides for an island-wide referendum for the people of Puerto Rico on the proposition whether Puerto Rico should become a State;
- Provides, if the referendum passes, for a convention of delegates, duly elected by the people of Puerto Rico, for the purpose of adopting the United States Constitution and framing a constitution for the State government of Puerto Rico.

Sec. 202.

- Provides for the submission of the proposed State constitution to the people of Puerto Rico for ratification;
- Provides, if the constitution is ratified, for a certified copy of the proposed constitution of Puerto Rico to be submitted to the President and the Congress for approval;
- Provides for election of two Senators and five Representatives for the new State of Puerto Rico.

Sec. 203.

- Provides for the certification of the results of the election to the President;
- Provides for the President's proclamation announcing the results of the election and upon the issuance of this proclamation, the Commonwealth would be deemed admitted by Congress into the Union.
- Provides that until the Commonwealth is admitted the laws of the Commonwealth and the officers of the Commonwealth shall continue to discharge their duties;
- Provides that upon admission of Puerto Rico into the Union all of the Commonwealth laws shall remain effective except as changed by Congress, the new State constitution or the State legislature.

Sec. 204.

- Entitles Puerto Rico to five members in the House of Representatives.

Sec. 205.

- Authorizes appropriations for expenses of the elections required by this Act.

Sec. 206.

- States that the United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico is a court under

Article III, Section I of the United States
Constitution.

Secs. 207 - 214.

- Provides certain housekeeping and other actions
necessary to coordinate the Act with other statutes
of the United States.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 14, 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: JIM CANNON 
SUBJECT: Puerto Rico Statehood Act of 1977

This is to present for your consideration the proposed legislation enabling the people of Puerto Rico to achieve the status of statehood for their Commonwealth.

The bill has been cleared by:

1. Department of the Interior
2. Department of Justice
3. Department of Defense
4. General Services Administration
5. Office of Management and Budget
6. Department of State

The message to Congress has been cleared by Counsel's Office (Kilberg), Max Friedersdorf, OMB (Mitchell) and Robert Hartmann.

I recommend that you sign the attached letter of transmittal.

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AM-PUERTO SKED 1-14

BY PIETER VAN BENNEKOM

Dem Ed

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO (UPI) -- GOV. CARLOS ROMERO BARCELO ANNOUNCED FRIDAY HE HAD MADE A DEAL WITH THE WHITE HOUSE TO DELAY ACTION ON THE PUERTO RICAN STATEHOOD ISSUE AT LEAST UNTIL 1980 AND TO AMEND PRESIDENT FORD'S STATEHOOD BILL IN CONGRESS.

ROMERO BARCELO, A STATEHOOD ADVOCATE WHO TOOK OFFICE JAN. 2 FOR A FOUR-YEAR TERM, SAID HE REACHED THE AGREEMENT IN PHONE TALKS WITH JAMES CANNON, HEAD OF PRESIDENT FORD'S COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISERS.

THE 44-YEAR OLD GOVERNOR SAID HE HAD ALSO CONVINCED FORD AIDES TO CHANGE A FORD BILL TO CONGRESS MAKING PUERTO RICO THE 51ST STATE, SO THAT THE CARIBBEAN ISLAND CAN VOTE ON THE ISSUE BEFORE CONGRESS TAKES IT UP.

ROMERO BARCELO SAID THE WASHINGTON AGREEMENT CALLED FOR NO LEGAL ACTION ON STATEHOOD AT LEAST UNTIL THE FOUR-YEAR PERIOD BETWEEN 1980 AND 1984.

IN THE MEANTIME, HE WILL LAUNCH AN EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO CONVINCE PUERTO RICANS OF THE BENEFITS OF STATEHOOD AND A BILATERAL PANEL WILL STUDY HOW THE ISLAND WOULD BE AFFECTED BY A SHIFT TO STATEHOOD.

PUERTO RICANS CURRENTLY PAY NO FEDERAL INCOME TAXES BUT LOCAL TAXES ARE HIGH. THEY PARTICIPATE IN SOME FEDERAL PROGRAMS SUCH AS FOOD STAMPS BUT WOULD STAND TO GAIN EVEN MORE THROUGH REVENUE SHARING IF THE ISLAND BECAME A STATE.

THE GOVERNOR SAID THE NEGOTIATED TIMETABLE WAS IN KEEPING WITH HIS ELECTION CAMPAIGN PROMISES NOT TO PUSH THE STATEHOOD ISSUE AND TO SPEND HIS FIRST YEARS IN OFFICE WORKING ON THE ISLAND'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TROUBLES.

EARLIER, ROMERO BARCELO HAD CRITICIZED FORD'S STATEHOOD BILL, BEING DRAFTED IN WASHINGTON, TELLING PUERTO RICAN NEWSPAPER EDITORS HE WOULD URGE PRESIDENT-ELECT JIMMY CARTER TO SCRUB THE BILL.

THAT BILL WOULD HAVE REQUIRED PUERTO RICANS TO HOLD A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION TO DRAFT A STATEHOOD CONSTITUTION. THEN THEY WOULD VOTE "YES" OR "NO" ON THE CONSTITUTION--IN EFFECT VOTING FOR OR AGAINST STATEHOOD.

BUT ROMERO BARCELO SAID HE FAVORS STARTING THE PROCESS WITH A PLEBISCITE INCLUDING ALL THREE CHOICES--STATEHOOD, INDEPENDENCE AND THE CURRENT STATUS OF SELF-GOVERNING "FREE ASSOCIATED STATE" OF THE UNITED STATES.

THE LAST TIME PUERTO RICO HELD A REFERENDUM ON THE ISSUE OF STATEHOOD, IT RESULTED IN AN OVERWHELMING VICTORY FOR THOSE WHO WANTED TO REMAIN A COMMONWEALTH.

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