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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CASE).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

March 2, 2020.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ED CASE to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2020, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with time equally allocated between the parties and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

PROMOTING PUERTO RICO'S STATEHOOD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Puerto Rico (Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN) for 5 minutes.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Mr. Speaker, on this date in 1917, Puerto Ricans became American citizens. Nineteen years after coming under the American flag, the Jones-Shafroth Act established that residents of Puerto Rico at the time, and their descendants, would be citizens of the United States.

This citizenship has provided us great opportunities for security and

progress. As such, we have become an integral part of the national experience, contributing in numerous fields of education, politics, law, science, art, and business; and we have defended this Nation side-by-side with our fellow citizens from other States.

We value our American citizenship so much that we included in our local constitution that one of our defining values is:

Our Citizenship of the United States and the aspiration to continue enriching our democratic heritage individually and collectively in the enjoyment of its rights and prerogatives.

In votes throughout the years, overwhelming majorities of Puerto Ricans have affirmed the intention to continue being U.S. citizens.

Yet, we have been denied that aspiration, denied that enrichment of values of American citizenship.

In 1898, when the U.S. Forces first landed in Puerto Rico, General Miles issued a proclamation promising: "We have come to . . . bring you protection . . . to promote your prosperity and bestow upon you the immunities and blessings of the . . . institutions of our government."

But instead, what happened was that almost right after achieving citizenship, a Supreme Court decision, *Balzac v. Porto Rico*, ruled that as residents in an unincorporated territory, we will only have partially those rights. That, contrary to what had been the case of every other territory before, achieving American citizenship did not mean necessarily a road to full equality as a State.

Since then, our enjoyment of rights shared by our fellow Americans in the States has been only in a limited manner, as the Congress and the courts see fit to grant them. The promise remains unfulfilled.

Unfulfilled, in spite of how 220,000 Puerto Ricans have worn this country's uniform and fought and bled for our

Nation under the orders of a Commander in Chief for whom they cannot vote.

Unfulfilled, when those living in Puerto Rico do not have full and equal representation in this Congress that decides how they will be ruled, what policies will be applied. As a Representative of almost 3.2 million American citizens, I am not allowed to vote on the passage of legislation that governs their daily lives.

This allows Puerto Rico to be treated unequally under Federal laws, regulations, and programs involving funding, levels of service, statistics, even being treated as if we were foreign for some purposes.

But we are Americans. We are born as U.S. citizens, in soil under the American flag, and the largest number of citizens who are disenfranchised.

That is why I continue to promote Puerto Rico's statehood. Our people have already decisively voted that the status quo is not acceptable and chosen their change. We deserve, we have earned full exercise of the dignity, rights, and privileges of our American citizenship, including full representation and participation in the political process which governs our lives, which is only possible with statehood.

Our American citizenship has represented 103 years of opportunities, but making the most of those opportunities can only happen in full equality. It is our right as citizens, and we have waited long enough.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 5 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

☐ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., ☐ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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