

The United States of America has contributed to fundamental changes towards democracy and full participation in political processes in other countries, thus asserting the universal principles of human rights.

Just as the United States has successfully promoted democratic values in the international sphere, it is now appropriate for that nation to attend to the claims for full political participation of the 3.75 million American citizens of Puerto Rico.

On November 14, 1993, the Government of Puerto Rico supported a plebiscite on Puerto Rico's status. Three different political options were submitted to the People: Statehood, represented by the New Progressive Party; Independence, represented by the Puerto Rican Independence Party; and Commonwealth, represented by the Popular Democratic Party. This last option, redefined by its advocates, is based on a bilateral pact that cannot be revoked or amended unilaterally by Congress. It had the following essential elements: first, parity of founding with the states in federal assistance programs; second, tax exemption within the scope of the former Section 936 of the United States Internal Revenue Code, since repealed; and third, the power of the Commonwealth to impose tariffs on agricultural products imported into Puerto Rico. The Commonwealth option obtained 48.2% of the votes cast in the 1993 plebiscite, while Statehood obtained 46% and Independence, 4%. In a prior plebiscite, convoked by the Government of Puerto Rico in 1967, Commonwealth had obtained 60% of the votes, while Statehood obtained 37.8%.

On December 14, 1994, the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico approved Concurrent Resolution No. 62. By means of this Resolution, Congress was asked to state its opinion on the redefinition of Commonwealth mentioned above. If the elements of that redefinition were deemed not to be viable, Congress was requested to inform the people of Puerto Rico about which status options it would be willing to consider in order to resolve our colonial problem, and what procedural steps should be taken to this effect.

On February 29, 1996, the leaders of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Resources of the One Hundred Fourth Congress and its Subcommittee on Insular and Native American Affairs, together with the House Committee on International Relations and its Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, answered the People and the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico by means of a Statement of Principles, indicating the unfeasibility of accepting the redefinition of Commonwealth submitted in the 1993 plebiscite. These same Congressional leaders also expressed their interest in promoting Federal legislation so that the One Hundred Fourth Congress could expedite the steps to be followed in resolving the status problem of Puerto Rico. They fulfilled their pledge by submitting H.R. 3024 and S.R. 2019 with bipartisan support, for the purpose of responding to Concurrent Resolution No. 62, approved in 1994 by the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico.

On June 28, 1996 four Congressmen who are members of the Minority Delegation of the House of Representatives of the United States also responded to Concurrent Resolution No. 62, through a letter in which they stated that "it is clear that Puerto Rico remains a non-incorporated territory that is subject to the authority of Congress under the Territorial Clause . . .", thus upholding the conclusions set forth in the February 29, 1996 letter, mentioned above.

Barely a month later, on July 11, 1996, eleven Congressmen belonging to the Minority Delegation of the House of Representatives of the United States sent a letter to the Mi-

nority Leader of the House, stating their total support of H.R. 3024, which had been presented to that body in response to Concurrent Resolution No. 62.

The Subcommittee on Insular and Native American Affairs of the United States House of Representatives, exercised primary jurisdiction over the matters set forth in Concurrent Resolution No. 62. While studying and approving H.R. 3024 on June 12, 1996, the Subcommittee considered proposals—rejected until then—for the adoption of the redefinition of Commonwealth, either as included in the 1993 plebiscite ballot or, as an alternative, the non binding and never-adopted definition presented in a 1990 legislative report to the United States House of Representatives on the status of Puerto Rico. Both proposals on Commonwealth were overwhelmingly defeated in votes of ten to one for the first, and eight to one, for the second.

On June 26, 1996, the House Committee on Rules adopted House Report 104-713, Part 2, which endorsed well-founded provisions for the purpose of facilitating congressional consideration of the measures that responded to the results of the self-determination process, as contemplated in H.R. 3024, which set forth a 3-stage decision-making process, with periodic referral in the event of an inconclusive result in any of the stages.

We recognize that substantial progress was achieved during the One Hundred Fourth Congress in establishing a federal policy to promote the decolonization of Puerto Rico. But today, at the commencement of the work of the One Hundred Fifth Congress, the reality of the situation is that after almost a century during which Puerto Rico has been under the sovereignty of the United States, the Federal Government has never approved or implemented specific measures geared to promoting a process in a conclusive binding manner, by which the American citizens of Puerto Rico may democratically express their wishes regarding their final political status.

We also recognize that even though important votes on the political status in Puerto Rico were carried out in 1967 and 1993 under the auspices of the Government of Puerto Rico, other voting events will be required in order to resolve the status question once and for all; and that Congress has still not defined the interests and responsibilities of the Federal Government regarding that process.

The need to resolve Puerto Rico's political status persists. It must be carried out by means of an effective and enlightened process, whose legitimacy is acceptable to Congress, acting in the exercise of the sovereignty of the United States over Puerto Rico, pursuant to the full powers granted under the Territorial Clause of the Constitution of the United States, Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2 and which enables the People of Puerto Rico to achieve a sovereign political status through realistic and decolonizing alternatives.

Following the plebiscites carried out by local initiative in 1967 and 1993 and the corresponding results, the Congress of the United States has refused to accept and implement as permanent and binding the definition of Commonwealth that was presented to the voters in 1993. As a result, we must establish a process based on options defined in such a way that both Congress and the American citizens of Puerto Rico recognize that a choice based upon perpetuating the lack of political suffrage and the subordination to the plenary powers of Congress under the Territorial Clause does not represent the best interests of the residents of Puerto Rico nor the rest of the United States.

The final, permanent status of Puerto Rico should be consistent with the democratic principles of freedom, human rights and the

goals of political, economic and social development that constitute the legacy of a century in which the political status of Puerto Rico has evolved within the flexibility allowed under the American constitutional framework. Although historical forces have caused the ongoing evolution of Puerto Rico towards self-determination to be delayed at sometimes and accelerated at others, now is the time to take the final step. This historic moment requires the adoption of measures that are carefully pondered yet decisive, in order to solve the political status of Puerto Rico by the beginning of a new century and a new millennium.

In 1998 Puerto Rico must not complete one hundred years of colonialism under the American flag without at least being in an irreversible, inevitable process of decolonization.

Be it Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico:

Section 1.—To request of the One Hundred Fifth Congress and the President of the United States of America to respond to the democratic aspirations of the American citizens of Puerto Rico, in order to achieve a means of guaranteeing the prompt decolonization of Puerto Rico through a plebiscite sponsored by the Federal Government, to be held no later than 1998.

Section 2.—It is hereby ordered that this Concurrent Resolution be delivered to all members of the Congress of the United States of America, to the President, the Hon. William J. Clinton, and to the Secretary General of the United States.

Section 3.—The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate of Puerto Rico are hereby authorized to designate a Special Joint Committee made up of legislators from the three political parties of Puerto Rico, for the sole purpose of personally delivering the text of this Concurrent Resolution to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro-Tempore and the Majority Leader of the Senate, and to the leaders of the Minority delegations of the Congress.

Section 4.—This Concurrent Resolution shall take effect immediately after its approval.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT C. GRAVES,
A FOUNDER OF THE NATIONAL
MARROW DONOR PROGRAM

HON. C.W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 1997

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I report to my colleagues the death of Robert C. Graves, D.V.M., who was a founder and the first chairman of the board of the National Marrow Donor Program.

Dr. Graves, who died February 13, 1997, at his home in Fort Collins, CO, was one of the most unique people I have ever been associated with during my service in Congress. A veterinarian and rancher, he was a colorful and persuasive individual who decided our Nation needed a national registry of potential bone marrow donors. He worked tirelessly to create such a registry that today saves lives every day.

He will be forever remembered for his work to help establish the National Marrow Donor Program. He was spurred onward in his drive to establish a national registry by his daughter Laura, who received the first unrelated marrow

donor transplant in 1979. At that time, there was no centralized listing of potential marrow donors. Instead, there were a few small, community-based listings of possible donors, many developed around the plight of a patient like Laura, suffering from leukemia.

Although Laura was fortunate enough to find an unrelated matched donor, she lost the battle to leukemia. Her father, however, never gave up the fight and one day in 1986 we met here in the halls of the U.S. Capitol, both on a quest to achieve the same goal—the establishment of a national bone marrow registry.

Together with Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., whose family like that of Bob Graves was touched by the need for a bone marrow donor, we found an interest in this project with the U.S. Navy. By providing a small appropriation in 1986, we gave birth to a national registry, to honor all those such as Laura Graves who inspired us to find a way to save lives. Bob Graves became the first chairman of the board for the National Marrow Donor Program and during its formative months played a major role in its organization and in its activation.

Today, 10 years later, it is with great pride that I report the National Marrow Donor Program is a true success story. With more than 2.5 million volunteers in the national registry, we proved many people wrong, including a former Director of the National Institutes of Health, who told the three of us that we would never be able to find more than 50,000 people willing to sign up for such a national program.

Bob Graves was a plain spoken but focused man who devoted a good part of his life to helping others. He not only worked the Halls of Congress and the Colorado State Legislature, but traveled the world to recruit foreign nations to be partners with the national registry. In large part through his efforts, we now have agreements with 14 other countries, which allows bone marrow to cross international borders on a regular basis.

To honor Bob and Laura Graves, the board of the National Marrow Donor Program, established the Laura Graves Award, given annually to an individual who has contributed greatly to saving lives through advancing unrelated bone marrow transplantation. My wife Beverly and I are honored to have been a recipient of this award, which is displayed prominently in my office. It is a constant reminder of Dr. Robert C. Graves, who we were blessed to know as partner in our quest to save lives, and as a true friend.

Mr. Speaker, my deepest sympathy goes out to his wife Sherry and his children. They can be consoled by knowing that Bob touched the lives of more people throughout the world than he would ever know. Many of those people owe their lives today to this crusading rancher from Fort Collins, CO who had a vision and never would be deterred until he fulfilled that vision and a promise to his daughter.

INTRODUCTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA TAX REVENUE NONDISCRIMINATION ACT OF 1997

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 1997

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce the District of Columbia Tax Revenue Nondiscrimination Act of 1997, a bill which would remove congressionally established tax

exemptions that prevent the District of Columbia from taxing favored special interests within its borders. The bill targets 36 organizations, without regard to political affiliation or influence, which have been given property or income tax breaks on an ad hoc special interest basis.

Congress granted each of these tax exemptions prior to home rule—many in the 19th century—when Congress governed the District and freely allowed tax breaks for Members' favorite special interests. My bill would remove these prehome rule exemptions.

Removing these congressionally mandated tax exemptions will not solve the District's financial crisis, but will correct profound discrimination and inequity at a time when the District is on its financial knees. Congress should no longer contribute to the District's financial crisis by denying it access to ordinary revenue. I urge my colleagues to pass the District of Columbia Tax Revenue Nondiscrimination Act and let Congress finally become a part of the solution to the District's financial crisis, rather than remaining a major contributor to the District's financial problems.

The following is a list of the 36 organizations covered by this bill: American Chemical Society, American Forestry Association, Brookings Institution, Medical Society of the District of Columbia, National Academy of Science, American Pharmaceutical Association, National Geographic Society, National Lutheran Home, American Association to Promote the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf, Disabled American Veterans, National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, Jewish War Veterans, Louise Home, Oak Hill Cemetery, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Luther Statue Association, Young Women's Christian Association, Young Men's Christian Association, Edes Home, General Education Board, Daughters of the American Revolution, National Society United States Daughters of 1812, National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, American Legion, National Education Association, Society of the Cincinnati, American Veterans of WWII, Veterans of Foreign Wars, National Women's Party, American Association of University Women, National Guard Association of the United States, Woodrow Wilson House, American Institute of Architects, Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae), Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac), and Student Loan Marketing Association (Sallie Mae).

HOUSING COUNSELING ENHANCEMENT ACT

HON. JAMES A. TRAFICANT, JR.

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 1997

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Housing Counseling Enhancement Act to help veterans stave off foreclosure and to keep their homes. I urge my colleagues to once again cosponsor and support this important legislation.

The bill, supported by such diverse groups as the Mortgage Bankers Association [MBA] and the National Federation of Housing Counselors, corrects a flaw in the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968.

Under current law, borrowers with conventional loans and borrowers with loans backed by the Federal Housing Administration [FHA] receive notification informing them that housing counseling is available. The notification is

sent out by the lender when the account is 45 days delinquent and includes a 1-800 number that directs the borrower to the nearest housing counseling agency.

Shamefully, the law exempts from notification requirements veterans who receive loans backed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs [VA]. My bill, which was approved by the House during the 103d Congress, will remove this exemption.

It is common knowledge that the housing counseling program administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD] has helped to dramatically stave off foreclosures of FHA-backed loans. By working with individuals and families to avoid foreclosure and eviction, the program has saved the Federal Government \$6 for every dollar invested.

As such, I have worked to expand the reach of housing counselors. In 1989, I successfully extended the program to include those with conventional loans through enactment of the Emergency Homeownership Counseling [EHC] Program.

Although veterans can participate in the housing counseling program, they are still excluded from receiving notification. For the past two Congresses I have attempted to rectify this situation but to no avail. In 1993, my colleagues in the House approved of removing the exclusion, but the measure died in the Senate as part of an otherwise contentious Housing authorization bill.

Under my bill, the VA is still free to offer its own counseling services. In fact, my measure in no way impacts, burdens, or requires any involvement from the VA. Instead, my bill gives borrowers additional means to avoid a nightmare.

It should be pointed out, however, that HUD's notification process is more effective than the VA's because the VA does not notify the delinquent borrower until he or she is 105 days delinquent. As anybody who has faced foreclosure can attest, 90 days is already too late, let alone 105. Consequently, although the delinquency rate of HUD-backed loans is higher than VA-backed loans, the percentage of loans in foreclosure is nearly the same for both types. The notification process has also helped to work wonders for conventional loans, where the number of loans in foreclosure is less than 1 percent.

Housing counselors have urged me to help the roughly 3.5 million borrowers with VA-backed loans avoid foreclosure. I believe the Housing Counseling Enhancement Act is a step in that direction. The MBA has expressed, from a lender perspective, that the bill is economically sound because it helps to prevent costly foreclosures. In a letter of support to my office, the MBA wrote: "Counseling for veteran borrowers experiencing payment difficulties is a valuable tool in preventing foreclosures and we, respectfully, urge congressional approval of your bill."

We would be wise to heed MBA's input. With each foreclosure costing the Government an average of \$28,000, Congress can ill-afford not to adopt the bill.

Mr. Speaker, at times Congress passes spending programs that appear one-way in nature. We spend the money, but never see the benefits. Housing counseling, however, is a preventive program with a proven track record of helping homeowners avoid nightmarish and costly foreclosures.

Again, I urge my colleagues to sign on as a cosponsor to the Housing Counseling Enhancement Act.