

Opponents of this bill, of H.R. 2499, contend that the two-step process stacks the deck against the current status and in favor of statehood. This is simply not the case, Madam Speaker. H.R. 2499 does not exclude nor favor any status option. Under this legislation, the purpose of the first plebiscite is clear: to inform Congress whether the majority of Puerto Ricans consent to the current political status.

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Only if a majority of voters expresses its desire to change the current status is a second vote mandated on the three alternatives: independence, statehood, and free association.

This two-step process was recommended by the President's task force on Puerto Rico's status. This task force was initiated under the Clinton administration, and it was finalized by the Bush administration. The task force called upon the expertise of 16 Federal agencies in recommending a fair process for consulting with the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico.

Opponents of H.R. 2499 propose that the option of an enhanced commonwealth should be included as a status option during the second plebiscite. Well, this enhanced commonwealth, as envisioned by the bill's detractors, perpetuates the false hope that Puerto Ricans can have the best of both worlds:

They can have U.S. citizenship and national sovereignty;

They will receive all Federal funds and will have the power to veto those laws with which it disagrees.

If included as a viable option, an enhanced commonwealth proposal would permanently empower Puerto Rico to nullify Federal laws and court jurisdiction and to enter into an international organization and trade agreements, all while being under the military and financial protection of the United States.

It is no surprise that this proposal has been soundly rejected as a viable option by the U.S. Department of Justice, by the State Department, by the Clinton administration, and by the Bush administration.

Another misguided concern surrounding H.R. 2499 is that the bill fails to include an "English only" provision. It is premature to discuss this matter until the conclusion of the first and second plebiscites. H.R. 2499 does not require Congress to admit Puerto Rico as a State nor even to set the statehood process in motion if a majority of voters ultimately chooses statehood. If the people of Puerto Rico express a preference for statehood and if Congress is inclined to act upon that preference, further Federal legislation would be required. That legislation and not H.R. 2499 would be the appropriate vehicle in which to address any potential language-related condition on Puerto Rico's accession to statehood.

I would like now to change focus and to highlight the overwhelming bipar-

tisan support behind H.R. 2499. Introduced by the Resident Commissioner, this bill enjoys the backing of more than 180 cosponsors from both political parties, and it is strongly supported by Puerto Rico Governor Luis Fortuno, a former House colleague, who introduced similar versions of this bill in the past. This bill is also endorsed by numerous leaders in the Puerto Rican legislature and local government, including the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, and many other local officials.

Given the strong support, Madam Speaker, I hope that my colleagues will join me in supporting this bill when it comes to a floor vote later this week.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### PASS COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM NOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, over this weekend, the Governor of Arizona raised up the idea of prayer, and in her remarks, she indicated that she prayed for strength and that she prayed for our State.

I rise today to pray for Arizona, for this Nation, and for those who would think a law that was signed by the Arizona Governor raises any level of constitutionality. Yet I agree with the Governor of Arizona. They have been waiting very long, and there is a crisis that is necessary to address.

Madam Speaker, many of us on this side of the aisle have tried over and over again. Former President George Bush, in the last administration, tried, but that's where reasonable minds will disagree.

So I'd ask the Governor to ask her own party:

Why do they fail to stand up and be counted on a fair, comprehensive immigration reform proposal that, in years past, included border security as well as the opportunity for access to legalization?

So the actions this past week are a travesty, hypocritical, and not sincere because you'd ask the question: What is a legal contact? What are the law enforcement authorities of the State of Arizona to do in the midst of the work that they have in protecting the community from the array of criminal acts by anyone regardless of their background? There are burglaries, thefts, and rapes, robberies and actions that require the intervention of State and local law enforcement.

What is a legal contact? Is it a person who is rushing his pregnant wife to the

hospital and who is stopping to ask a police officer, Will you lead me through the lights to the hospital? Is that a legal contact?

What is a determination of reasonable probability? Is it brown skin? Is it someone who is dressed in yard clothes? What is the determination of reasonableness? There is no answer to that other than it is patently unconstitutional.

Yes, I want comprehensive immigration reform, which is a term that many have demonized—you have to run away from it now—but we in Texas have lived with this for a very long time, the men and women of all economic levels—the business community, the non-profit community, the faith community. The Houston-Galveston Diocese, our cardinal, the cardinal in the Houston area, has raised his voice, along with many faith leaders, to say that now is the time for real comprehensive immigration reform.

I am ashamed of the law that was written and signed, because it bears no fruit. Of course, there are law enforcement officers in the region, and certainly, I'm not from the area whose only voice is to claim airtime and to shout ridiculous comments: I can lock them up. Anybody, I can lock up. This is not to say that there is not empathy and sympathy for the borders in Arizona. There is a need now for comprehensive immigration reform for Arizona, for New Mexico, for California, for Texas—for all of America.

Though, I will tell you, Madam Speaker, if a young person comes to me in my district who came here from a foreign country—in this instance, France—who has been in our school system, who did not know the process and who is now unstated but who has never been in trouble and who is going through school—he is an immigrant, but unfortunately, status—then he is no less than the immigrants from Ireland, than the immigrants from Italy and the immigrants from places elsewhere who came to this country and who helped to build it and to make it a better place. Maybe he is no better than the immigrants who came in shackles, like myself, and their ancestors, who came in the bottom of the belly of a slave boat; but we found a way to regularize them. This Congress must find a way to regularize this process and all of the families who are huddled in fear, who have never perpetrated a crime.

I want to thank the leadership of this House and the leadership of the Senate, both of which are courageous enough to take the battering and the abuse of those who misuse the Constitution and who believe they are doing something. They are not.

Should they be responded to? Madam Speaker, they should. My answer is that we pass right now comprehensive immigration reform to save America, to save our dignity, to save the Constitution, and to stand for the values we believe in.