



Mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico
1969-1976
Governor of Puerto Rico
1977-1984
Member of the Senate of Puerto Rico
1986-1988
Non-voting Member of Congress
1993-2001

Carlos Romero Barceló

November 4, 2013

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Fully aware of your extremely important ongoing concern over the possibility that the United States might default on the payment of its government debt, I must nevertheless ask that you take a moment of your time to consider Puerto Rico's economic crisis – which more and more experts are now saying can be overcome solely via Federal intervention. However, *no one* has yet come forward with a specific proposal as to precisely how the Federal government can help to solve the Government of Puerto Rico's economic crisis.

Drawing upon my 50-year quest for unconditional civic and political equality for every American citizen in Puerto Rico (a quest that has encompassed 44 years of hands-on experience in public policy, government service and politics, at both the Federal and territorial levels), I welcome this opportunity to request, respectfully, that you give serious consideration to what I believe is a proposal that can contribute significantly to promoting not only the well-being of the American citizens who reside in Puerto Rico, but the well-being of our Nation as a whole.

Above all else, the adoption of my proposal would have the virtue of terminating the disenfranchisement – plus numerous other forms of nefarious “separate and unequal” treatment – to which an overwhelmingly Hispanic population (currently about 3.7-million persons) has been subjected in Puerto Rico throughout the 96 years that have elapsed since Congress granted us U.S. citizenship in 1917.

At present, in the 50 states, each person's share of the national debt comes to approximately \$52,845. Puerto Rico's approximately 3.7-million residents are all exempt from paying Federal income tax on money earned in Puerto Rico; as a result, we in Puerto Rico bear no responsibility for the U.S. national debt. However, our territorial ("Commonwealth") public debt amounts to roughly \$70-billion. Each Puerto Rico resident's share of that territorial public debt is therefore approximately \$18,900.

If Puerto Rico is admitted to the Union as a state, then its residents will immediately join the 317-million residents of the other 50 states in shouldering the full burden of paying all Federal taxes. Simultaneously, we shall assume responsibility for our proportional share of the national debt. Upon adding the 3.7-million residents in Puerto Rico to the population in the 50 other states, each individual's share of the Nation's \$16.7-trillion government debt becomes about \$52,234 – a drop of \$611.

Under my proposal, the U.S. Treasury would accept responsibility for defraying the outstanding principal and interest on Puerto Rico's government debt, as of the date upon which our territory is admitted to the Union. This step would facilitate economic growth and prosperity for the new state, while helping to offset Puerto Rico's assumption of its share of the national debt. Thus would the national debt rise to a bit more than \$16.8-trillion, while – now *including* the 3.7-million residents of Puerto Rico – each individual's share of that debt would drop to approximately \$52,430: \$415 *less* than what it is now. **In other words, as a result of Puerto Rico's full integration into the Union, our Nation would not only become more irrefutably democratic and culturally diverse, but more fiscally secure as well!**

Enactment of the formula set forth above, I am reliably informed, would generate for the U.S. Internal Revenue Service at least \$8-billion annually in new income tax payments from comparatively wealthy Puerto Rico sources. Moreover, this figure would surely increase substantially as U.S. statehood stimulates (as it has done for *every* former territory) a steadily improving Puerto Rico economic expansion.

Above and beyond the "bottom line" benefit summarized above, Puerto Rico statehood would convert a worldwide public-opinion *burden* into a major *asset* for the USA! Ever since the end of the Nineteenth Century, Puerto Rico has endured the ignominy of being what most nations throughout the world

invariably brand as an American “colony.” After an appalling 115 years, *U.S. statehood would erase that stigma*. At last, 3.7-million natural-born U.S. citizens would acquire such absolutely fundamental

American rights as the right to vote for President, for Vice President, for U.S. Senators, and for full voting members of the U.S. House of Representatives. No longer could despotic, intolerant, hate-mongering hostile powers point fingers at the President and the Congress and credibly charge that they persistently deny voting rights and civic and economic equality to a large community of their fellow citizens who “just happen” to be predominantly Spanish-speaking and non-Anglo.

In closing, as you are well aware, the date of your re-election coincided with the day on which – for the first time ever – an absolute majority (54%) of Puerto Rico’s voters *rejected* our territorial status. Thus, our President and our Congress are now – *without our consent* –undemocratically governing us as a territory (colony). On that same date, also for the first time ever, 61% of our voters manifested overt support for U.S. statehood as a preferred alternative to our current territorial (colonial) status.

Within this context, I have no doubt that you could inspiringly burnish your Administration’s legacy – and likewise extend an unprecedented *abrazo* of solidarity to all Hispanic Americans – by submitting a bill to Congress that would unequivocally grant U.S. statehood to Puerto Rico, subject only to the eventual statute’s ratification by a majority of Puerto Rico’s registered voters.

So it is, Mr. President that I devoutly hope this letter will be recognized as a constructive exercise in “multi-tasking”: that is, in promoting two or more important causes via a single course of action. In that spirit, I look forward eagerly to discussing these points in greater detail with you or with whomever among your White House advisors you may choose to designate for that purpose.

Sincerely,



Carlos Romero Barceló