

Puerto Rico

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources United States Senate

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Puerto Rico has been an "unincorporated territory" of the United States since the conclusion of the Spanish American War, 115 years ago. After 115 years it is clearly time for Puerto Rico to determine what political path it will take. The question of whether Puerto Rico should become a State or a sovereign Nation and whether there are other options defines much of the political debate today on the islands. Puerto Rico faces huge economic and social challenges. Per capita income is stuck at about half that of the poorest U.S. State. The violent crime rate is well above the national average and rising. The lack of resolution of Puerto Rico's status, not only distracts from addressing these and other issues, it contributes to them. As the most recent reports from the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's status found, "identifying the most effective means of assisting the Puerto Rican economy depends on resolving the ultimate question of status." 95 years after receiving U.S. citizenship, Puerto Ricans have achieved leadership in the U.S. military, in business, in the Congress, on the Supreme Court and in many other prestigious positions. But for Puerto Rico to meet its economic and social challenges and to achieve its full potential, this debate over status needs to be settled.



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