



LEGISLATIVE ALERT

SUPPORT H.R. 2499 **PUERTO RICO DEMOCRACY ACT**

April 27, 2010

Please allow me to share with you some of what I have learned over the years about Puerto Rico and our fellow Americans in the territory, as well as why I am urging Congress to approve H.R. 2499 without delay.

This bill will allow the first federally recognized referendum on the island's future political status in 111 years of American sovereignty over the territory. Although some suggest representative self-determination is inconvenient at this time, H.R. 2499 is long overdue. It really is just the first step in a long journey, but America's national interest will be served best if Congress passes H.R. 2499 now.

When I visit Puerto Rico, as I have many times, it always feels like home to me, in all the best ways. Did you know that there are more churches per square mile in Puerto Rico than in any state of the union, and Americans from Puerto Rico serve in the U.S. military at a per capita rate higher than 49 states? San Juan is the oldest city under the American flag, and Puerto Rico is a bastion of strong American patriotic and representative values, with the highest rate of voter turnout for elections in the nation and the hemisphere.

Did you know Puerto Rico is home to more of our fellow Americans than 25 of the states in the union, and that for more than eight decades, U.S. citizenship has been conferred at birth for Americans in the territory? Yet, they do not have voting representation in Congress or a vote in presidential elections. On the other hand, I

have learned that federal treatment of their homeland is a high priority for another 4 million Americans from Puerto Rico who live and vote throughout the nation.

As the metropolitan and territorial center of U.S. national interests at the Southeastern-most border of our nation, Puerto Rico is a stronghold of America's political, economic, social and strategic security interests in the Caribbean and Latin America. As a nation, we would be foolish to take for granted the historical and future role of Puerto Rico in the long-term success of our Republic.

At this moment in our nation's history, it is a moral, political and representative government imperative that Congress allow the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico to express their aspirations. They need a fully democratic and permanent future political status, in a federally sponsored advisory referendum on legally valid status options.

Please do not let misleading messages urging delay and confusing the real issues distract you from what is at stake for American values and the national interest in how Congress addresses the Puerto Rico status question in this session.

Please Support H.R. 2499 Puerto Rico Democracy Act.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Lou Sheldon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Reverend Louis P. Sheldon
Chairman