

By: Gutierrez

H.C.R. No. 199

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States  
2 as a result of the treaty concluding the Spanish-American War in  
3 1898; in 1917, the United States government extended U.S.  
4 citizenship to Puerto Ricans but did not provide them with full  
5 citizenship rights, including voting representation in the United  
6 States Congress and the right to vote for the President of the  
7 United States; and

8 WHEREAS, Since 1917 more than 200,000 United States citizens  
9 from Puerto Rico have served valiantly in every war and armed  
10 conflict in which our nation has fought--including our current war  
11 against terrorism--in defense of democratic principles and  
12 self-determination; four heroic Puerto Ricans--Hector  
13 Santiago-Colón, Euripides Rubio, Carlos James Lozada, and Luis  
14 Fernando Garcia--have been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor  
15 for their valor in defending American democracy and freedoms; and

16 WHEREAS, Puerto Ricans have had to endure the injustices  
17 inherent in a colonial political status for more than five  
18 centuries, including 104 years under U.S. sovereignty; and

19 WHEREAS, While the United States Constitution promises equal  
20 protection under the law to all U.S. citizens, the island's current  
21 political status treats U.S. citizens residing in Puerto Rico  
22 differently from citizens residing in the 50 states; and

23 WHEREAS, Primarily as a result of the unresolved political  
24 status of Puerto Rico, the United States citizens of Puerto Rico

1 earn less than one-half the per capita income of the U.S. citizens  
2 residing in the poorest state of the nation; and

3 WHEREAS, The economic limitations resulting from the  
4 unresolved political status of the island have resulted in 3.4  
5 million Puerto Ricans maintaining residence on the United States  
6 mainland; it is estimated that by 2010 more Puerto Ricans will  
7 reside on the mainland than on the island of Puerto Rico; and

8 WHEREAS, We recognize the many social, economic, and  
9 political contributions that the 3.8 million United States citizens  
10 residing in Puerto Rico, as well as the 3.4 million citizens  
11 residing in the United States, make to preserve and enhance this  
12 nation's democratic values; and the State of Texas counts on a  
13 growing Puerto Rican community and an ever-increasing Latino  
14 population from which to draw many of our state's business,  
15 cultural, and political leaders; and

16 WHEREAS, In 1997 the legislature of Puerto Rico formally  
17 petitioned the United States Congress to respond to the democratic  
18 aspirations of the United States citizens of Puerto Rico by means of  
19 a federally sanctioned plebiscite to be held no later than 1998, but  
20 Congress has yet to respond to said petition; the continued  
21 disenfranchisement of the island's 3.8 million residents  
22 constitutes a clear violation of the civil rights of these United  
23 States citizens; and

24 WHEREAS, The Texas Legislature recognizes that the time has  
25 come to enable Puerto Rico to exercise its right to  
26 self-determination and urges all citizens of Texas and the United  
27 States to support the enactment of a federal law leading to full

1 self-government for Puerto Rico within the context of a  
2 congressionally sanctioned plebiscite; now, therefore, be it

3       RESOLVED, That the 78th Legislature of the State of Texas  
4 request that the Congress and President of the United States enact  
5 legislation that would define the political status options  
6 available to the United States citizens of Puerto Rico and  
7 authorize a plebiscite to provide an opportunity for Puerto Ricans  
8 to make an informed decision regarding the island's future  
9 political status; and, be it further

10       RESOLVED, That the 78th Legislature of the State of Texas  
11 hereby respectfully request the Texas delegation to the Congress of  
12 the United States to actively promote and support timely action on  
13 this important civil rights issue; and, be it further

14       RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official  
15 copies of this resolution to the president and vice president of the  
16 United States, to the speaker of the house of representatives and  
17 the president of the senate of the United States Congress, to the  
18 chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural  
19 Resources, to the chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives  
20 Committee on Resources, and to all the members of the Texas  
21 delegation to the Congress with the request that this resolution be  
22 officially entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the  
23 Congress of the United States of America.