



March 2, 2013

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

Dear Mr. President:

On this date, 96 years ago, the bill granting U.S. citizenship to individuals born in Puerto Rico was signed into law. Today, we—political leaders, veterans, students and ordinary citizens from Puerto Rico and other areas of the country—have gathered outside the White House, a symbol of American democracy, to commemorate this anniversary. It is a bittersweet occasion, the cause for both celebration and sorrow. The people of Puerto Rico cherish their U.S. citizenship, but this citizenship is second-class. Despite the countless contributions they have made to this nation in times of peace and war, residents of Puerto Rico still lack the most basic rights: they cannot vote for the leaders who make their national laws and are treated unequally under those laws.

But, above all, today is about a renewed hope in the future. On November 6, 2012, you were re-elected President, in a vote in which residents of Puerto Rico could not participate. That same day, however, the people of Puerto Rico went to the polls to express their views in a referendum on the territory's political destiny.

The results were historic. On the first question, 54 percent voted to end the current status. To the extent that the people of Puerto Rico had ever consented to the present arrangement, that consent has now—proudly—been withdrawn.

On the second question, voters were asked to express their preference among the three alternatives to the current status and, of the nearly 1.4 million voters who participated, 61 percent chose statehood. For the first time in history, more people in Puerto Rico want the Island to become a state than to continue as a territory.

After the vote, your spokesman said: “The results were clear: the people of Puerto Rico want the issue of status resolved, and a majority chose statehood in the second question. Now it is time for Congress to act and the Administration will work with them on that effort, so that the people of Puerto Rico can determine their own future.”

Nothing is more vital than to respect the results of the democratic process. Consistent with the commitments you have made to Puerto Rico, we ask you to exercise your leadership to ensure that the federal government responds appropriately to the November 6<sup>th</sup> referendum.

As you have observed, the arc of history is long, but it bends towards justice. Ninety-six years ago, the people of Puerto Rico became American citizens. We look forward to the day when that citizenship becomes full and equal, and we know in our hearts that day is not far off.