

Whereas: Puerto Rico was first colonized by Spain in 1493, and then ceded to the United States for war indemnities it incurred during the Spanish American War;

Whereas: Puerto Ricans constitute a distinct people with their own history, culture, and have struggled to express their “Inalienable Right” to self-determination and governance under both Spanish and US occupation;

Whereas: in 1917, the US Congress, under the Jones Act, imposed US citizenship on Puerto Ricans, and those refusing it were excluded from participating in Puerto Rico government activities;

Whereas: Puerto Ricans residing on the *island* are not represented in the US Senate, and are represented in the US House by one non-voting *Commissioner*, and furthermore Puerto Ricans are not eligible to vote in US presidential elections when residing in Puerto Rico;

Whereas: Don Pedro Albizu Campos, a prominent leader, who led the struggle to end US colonialism in Puerto Rico (1920s-60s), studied at the University of Vermont, and was a contributor to the Irish Constitution;

Whereas: the US Supreme Court in a series of rulings, referred to as the *Insular Cases*, has ruled that Puerto Rico is part of, but separate from the US;

Whereas: in Supreme Court Justice Harlan’s dissent in the *Insular cases* (1901) involving overseas territories annexed by the U.S wrote: “The idea that this country may acquire territories anywhere upon the earth, by conquest or treaty, and hold them as mere colonies or provinces, the people inhabiting them to enjoy only such rights as Congress chooses to accord them, is wholly inconsistent with the spirit and genius, as well as with the words, of the Constitution.”

Whereas: the United Nations Founding Charter, to which the US is a signatory and thus has the weight of Law, mandated that all “non-governing” people and territories had to be decolonized, and that they possessed the right to independence and self-governance;

Whereas: the US falsely reported to the UN that it had complied with the decolonization mandate, in regards to Puerto Rico having achieved self-governance, with the US having granted Puerto Rico *Freely, Associated Commonwealth* status;

Whereas: in later disclosed Truman administration officials communication to the US congressional leaders that nothing had changed with the granting of *Freely, Commonwealth* status, and that the US Congress retained all powers with regards to Puerto Rico;

Whereas: the US military has appropriated large areas of land in order to house military installations, conduct its and its NATO allies live firing naval exercise which have resulted in

ecological destruction on the islands of Culebra and Vieques, and higher than normal rates of cancer in these two sister islands;

Whereas: more than 30% of Puerto Rican women, between the 1930 and 70s, were involuntarily sterilized under a US funded birth control program;

Whereas: the US Congress authorized six non-binding status (US statehood, political independence, continued commonwealth) plebiscites since the 1960s, and the voting outcome was indecisive with continued Commonwealth status winning the first two plebiscites, “None of the Above” winning the third plebiscites vote, and the last three having been “rejected and deemed inconclusive:”

Whereas: Vermont, referred to as the *Conscience of the United States*, freely entered the US as the 14th state from the status of. Republic, free from compulsion or imposition, and its Constitution guarantees its citizens more personal freedoms than the US Constitution;

Whereas: the US Department of Justice opined that the two most recent status vote outcome was questionable because Puerto Rican voters were presented with only a “yes or no” vote on one status option, statehood; only 30% of voters participated; and the voting was marred by many irregularities and misleading language;

Whereas; the Vermont Democratic Party in its 1984 and 1988 at its state nominating conventions called for the US to comply with the UN mandate on the granting of self-determination to its colony, Puerto Rico, and to terminate the US Navy bombing in Vieques ;

Whereas: the people of Vieques successfully conducted the longest civil disobedience campaign in US history (1999-2001), and former US President George Bush ordered the Navy firing range closed effective 2003;

Whereas: the US Congress’ 2016 Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) legislation imposed a Fiscal Oversight and Management Board (FOMB) which has prescribed austerity measures which have resulted in massive cuts to public sector jobs, the closing of schools and hospitals, cuts to pension benefits paid to retired and current teachers, and government workers, reductions in government services, cuts in funds to higher education, the privatization of the Commons and outsourcing of jobs and services to outside entities, and the relaxing of best- use land practices and relaxing of environmental regulations;

Whereas: H.R.1522 and S.780’s, Puerto Rico Statehood Bill, would if passed put Puerto Rico on a path towards US statehood—despite the legitimacy of the status vote outcome, which is the Bills justification, has been challenged by the US Department of Justice due to voting irregularities, low voter participation, and ballot wording.

Whereas: H.R.2070, and S. 865 Puerto Rico Self-Determination Bill acknowledges that the residents of Puerto Rico should have the ability to determine their political future and territorial

status through referendum. Bills H.R. 2070 and S.865 declare that the legislature of Puerto Rico has the authority to call a status convention regarding the political status of the territory, and provides for congressional consideration of a joint resolution to ratify the self-determination option selected through referendum.

Let it be resolved that the delegates by a vote having been taken, and the Resolution having been passed at the September 2021 Vermont AFL-CIO Convention, will inform the Vermont congressional delegation of its support for H.R. and S.865, and urges its members to support the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Bill.

Furthermore, we demand that the US Navy cease its open-air detonation of unexploded military ordnance on the island of Vieques, and that Congress appropriate the necessary funding to decontaminate the former Navy firing range, and develop the island's economy sustainably;

And, finally let it be resolved that those voting for this Resolution send their solidarity and support to the unions representing teachers (Puerto Rico Teachers Federation), and government (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), as well as utility workers (The Unión de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica y Riego, (UTIER) as they fight austerity measures, privatization and cutbacks to worker benefits and basic services to the Puerto Rican population.