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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 636 Session of  
2017

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INTRODUCED BY CRUZ, VAZQUEZ, DONATUCCI, SCHWEYER, GODSHALL,  
CALTAGIRONE, THOMAS, KINSEY, V. BROWN, J. HARRIS AND  
D. COSTA, DECEMBER 29, 2017

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, DECEMBER 29, 2017

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A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Congress of the United States to recognize and act  
2 upon the results of the June 11, 2017, Puerto Rican  
3 plebiscite.

4 WHEREAS, The Constitution of the United States recognizes  
5 states, the District of Columbia, Indian Tribes and territories  
6 as four distinct forms of political status within the United  
7 States; and

8 WHEREAS, Clause 2 of section 3 of Article IV of the  
9 Constitution of the United States, known as the Territorial  
10 Clause, confers on Congress the power to govern territories in  
11 local and national matters; and

12 WHEREAS, The United States currently has 16 territories  
13 beyond the 50 states, including Puerto Rico, Guam, the United  
14 States Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands and American  
15 Samoa, which are the only territories that are inhabited; and

16 WHEREAS, Of the five inhabited territories, Puerto Rico is  
17 the largest, most populated and closest to the United States  
18 mainland; and

1       WHEREAS, Approximately 3.5 million people live in Puerto Rico  
2 and another 5 million Puerto Ricans live on the United States  
3 mainland, including almost 424,000 living in the Commonwealth of  
4 Pennsylvania; and

5       WHEREAS, Puerto Rico became a territory in 1898 through the  
6 Treaty of Paris after the United States defeated Spain in the  
7 Spanish-American War; and

8       WHEREAS, In 1900, Congress passed the Foraker Act to replace  
9 the military government in Puerto Rico with a civilian  
10 government and to establish the Resident Commissioner position  
11 to represent Puerto Rico's interests in Washington as a  
12 nonvoting member of the United States House of Representatives;  
13 and

14       WHEREAS, Through passage of the Jones Act in 1917, Congress  
15 extended United States citizenship to Puerto Ricans and  
16 established a bill of rights for the island; and

17       WHEREAS, Congress twice recognized Puerto Rico's authority  
18 over matters of internal governance, first in 1950 through  
19 passage of the Federal Relations Act, and then through its  
20 approval of Puerto Rico's Constitution in 1952; and

21       WHEREAS, Despite these advanced democratic rights, Puerto  
22 Rico is still a territory under United States authority and  
23 Puerto Ricans cannot vote in presidential elections unless they  
24 move to one of the 50 states; and

25       WHEREAS, It has been the longstanding policy of the United  
26 States that American citizens of territories such as Puerto Rico  
27 can determine whether the territory should eventually become a  
28 state or a nation; and

29       WHEREAS, Since 1967, Puerto Rico has held four plebiscites  
30 and one Constitutional Amendment Referendum to determine the

1 will of the people regarding the island's political status; and

2 WHEREAS, Since the 1967 plebiscite, it has become apparent  
3 that Puerto Rico's territorial condition constitutes an  
4 unsustainable status of political subordination; and

5 WHEREAS, A majority of the voters rejected the continuation  
6 of Puerto Rico's current territorial status in the plebiscite  
7 held in Puerto Rico on November 6, 2012; and

8 WHEREAS, Under Public Law 113-76 of 2014, Congress responded  
9 to Puerto Rico's 2012 plebiscite by appropriating money to  
10 finance an objective, nonpartisan voter education campaign for a  
11 new plebiscite with options proposed by the Elections Commission  
12 of Puerto Rico that can resolve the question of the territory's  
13 political status and are not in conflict with the Constitution,  
14 laws and policies of the United States as certified by the  
15 Department of Justice; and

16 WHEREAS, Puerto Rico enacted the Puerto Rico Immediate  
17 Decolonization Act (Act No. 7-2017) on February 15, 2017, in  
18 accordance with Public Law 113-76; and

19 WHEREAS, The Puerto Rico Immediate Decolonization Act  
20 declared that no United States citizen, including those who  
21 reside in Puerto Rico, deserves to have lesser opportunities,  
22 lesser health services and a lesser quality of life than the  
23 rest of his or her fellow citizens; and

24 WHEREAS, Article four of the Puerto Rico Immediate  
25 Decolonization Act provides for the requirements of the  
26 Plebiscite for the Immediate Decolonization of Puerto Rico to be  
27 held on Sunday, June 11, 2017; and

28 WHEREAS, H.R. 260, known as the Puerto Rico Admission Act,  
29 was introduced by Representative Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon,  
30 Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico, to enable the admission of

1 the territory of Puerto Rico as a state into the United States;  
2 and

3 WHEREAS, H.R. 900 was introduced by Representative Luis  
4 Gutierrez, a Democrat from Illinois, to recognize Puerto Rico's  
5 sovereign nationhood under either independence or free  
6 association and to provide for a transition process; therefore  
7 be it

8 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the  
9 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania urge the Congress of the United  
10 States to recognize and act upon the results of the June 11,  
11 2017, Puerto Rican plebiscite; and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be sent to the  
13 President of the United States, to the presiding officers of  
14 each house of Congress and to each member of Congress from  
15 Pennsylvania.