

Barack Obama

February 12, 2008

Honorable Anibal Acevedo Vila
Governor
Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
La Fortaleza
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00901

Dear Governor Acevedo Vila:

Puerto Rico is a vitally important part of our country and Puerto Ricans have made immeasurable contributions to the United States. As President of the United States, I will pay close attention to issues that have an impact on the well-being of the people of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico's status must be based on the principle of self-determination. Puerto Rico has a proud history, an extraordinary culture, its own traditions, customs and language, and a distinct identity. As President, I will work closely with the Puerto Rican government, its civil society, and with Congress to create a genuine and transparent process for self-determination that will be true to the best traditions of democracy. As President, I will actively engage Congress and the Puerto Rican people in promoting this deliberative, open and unbiased process, that may include a constitutional convention or a plebiscite, and my Administration will adhere to a policy of strict neutrality on Puerto Rican status matters. My Administration will recognize all valid options to resolve the question of Puerto Rico's status, including commonwealth, statehood, and independence.

I strongly believe in equality before the law for all American citizens. This principle extends fully to Puerto Ricans. The American citizenship of Puerto Ricans is constitutionally guaranteed for as long as the people of Puerto Rico choose to retain it. I reject the assertion in reports submitted by a Presidential Task Force on December 22, 2005 and December 21, 2007 that sovereignty over Puerto Rico could be unilaterally transferred by the United States to a foreign country, and the U.S. citizenship of Puerto Ricans is not constitutionally guaranteed.



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I will also work closely with the government of Puerto Rico, its private sector and labor leaders to advance an aggressive agenda of job creation, economic development and new prosperity. The levels of unemployment on the Island over the last three decades are unacceptable, which is why I will propose the creation a federal-Puerto Rico joint task force to study and report not later than August 31, 2009 on specific ways to maximize the use of existing federal initiatives to generate jobs in Puerto Rico or on new federal initiatives to achieve that goal.

In addition, I will work closely with the government of Puerto Rico and Congress to enhance the participation of Puerto Rico in Medicaid and all federal health care assistance programs. My Administration will actively work with the Department of Defense as well to achieve an environmentally acceptable clean-up of the former U.S. Navy lands in Vieques, Puerto Rico. We will closely monitor the health of the people of Vieques and promote appropriate remedies to health conditions caused by military activities conducted by the U.S. Navy on Vieques. I will also work to evaluate and expand the existing land use plan for the former U.S. Navy lands to prioritize improving the lives of the Island's residents and the sustainable economic development of the people of Vieques.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barack Obama', written in a cursive style.

Barack Obama