

Benefits of Statehood

Representation at the National Level **51**

Currently P. R. is not represented in the national government of the US, which makes all laws, programs, and federal regulations that govern us as a territory of the United States. These issues impact all aspects of the lives of Puerto Ricans including the economy, taxes, trade, telecommunications, transportation, security, defense, justice, agriculture, environment, energy, health, education, among others. We do not, however, have a vote in that body that governs us.

As a territory, P.R. will always be at a disadvantage compared with states in their ability to ensure that their interests and aspirations are taken into due consideration in laws, regulations and federal programs. As a territory, Puerto Rico's only elected representative to the Federal Congress is the Resident Commissioner, who has no vote on the floor of the House although he is a member of that body. P.R. has no representation in the Senate.

Puerto Rico as a state would be able to choose two federal Senators and about five federal Representatives. Each federal Senator can have between 40 and 60 aides and every federal representative may have 18 aides. Both Senators and Representatives can gain an even larger amount of power and assistants if they win leadership positions in the committees to which they belong. This means that if Puerto Rico becomes a state it would have at least two votes in the Senate, five votes in the House and approximately 190 legislative aides. All these individuals would have the mandate and responsibility to see that the interests and aspirations of Puerto Rico are considered in each piece of federal legislation considered in Congress, including funding allocations, programs and benefits, and supervision agencies.

	State	Territory
Representatives	5 Representatives with votes About 90 Aides	1 Res. Commissioner 18 Aides
Senators	2 Senators with votes	0 Senators
Electoral Votes	About 100 Aides	0 Aides
	7 Electoral votes	0 Electoral votes

This territorial framework seems even worse when one considers that in P.R. we cannot vote for the President of the nation to which we belong, even though this is the head of the federal executive branch which has a number of agencies and programs operating in P.R. If it were a state, P. R. would have at least 7 votes in the electoral college that elects the President of the United States. 270 electoral votes are needed to elect the President. Puerto Rico would have more electoral votes than 15 states, which means that aspiring candidates to the federal executive would have greater incentive to visit Puerto Rico during their campaigns, hear our demands and make commitments to meet our needs and aspirations.

This lack of democratic representation at the national level to which we have been subjected for over 114 years is attributable exclusively to our political status as an American territory. The only way that the interests and aspirations of Puerto Rico can be properly addressed by the federal government, which leads the American nation to which we belong, is under statehood. Only statehood gives P. R. full representation at the national level of our federal government.