

Bill Comparison

“Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act” to “Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act”

April 2021

	Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act	Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act
Bill Number	H.R. 1522 & S. 780 (117 th Congress)	H.R. 2070 & S. 865 (117 th Congress)
Background	Bill acknowledges the results of the November 2020 plebiscite on statehood where a clear majority of 52.5% voted “YES” for immediate admission. It also acknowledges the results of the 2012 referendum where 54% rejected continuing under the current territory status and among the voters who chose a non-territorial option 61% chose statehood.	Bill engages in election denial by purposefully ignoring past votes held in Puerto Rico regarding the territory’s political status. Ironically, it disregards the locally driven self-determination efforts that have happened in Puerto Rico to date and engages in voter disenfranchisement by denying the significance of millions of votes cast where the electorate expressed its will in support of full voting rights as U.S. citizens.
Method of Self-Determination & Effectiveness of the Process	Bill presents a formal offer of statehood to the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico contingent on a direct ratification vote asking the electorate to confirm whether they want the territory to be admitted as a state of the Union with a simple “YES” or “NO” question. Bill is self-executing so, if the majority votes in favor of statehood the territory will be placed on a definitive path to statehood. If the majority rejects statehood then the island remains a territory with the option to pursue sovereignty at any time in the future. The bill does not force or impose statehood on Puerto Rico, it only offers statehood if the majority wants it and provides the legal means for it to happen.	Bill recognizes the inherent authority of the Puerto Rico legislature to create a “Status Convention” to identify and define which self-determination options voters can choose from, but allows the Governor to be by-passed in the process of creating the Convention. Voters would first elect members to the convention, the convention delegates would then “negotiate” with Congress and the federal executive on the definitions for acceptable non-territorial status options. Then the delegates would choose what options to bring forth for consideration by Puerto Rico’s voters in a plebiscite. Voters would have to rank their preference among options presented in a method they’ve never used before. Bill is non-binding, so even after the plebiscite results would be certified, Congress may or may not choose to approve the option chosen by voters.
Status Option Definitions	Statehood is clearly defined to be on equal footing with all other states, meaning the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico would have equal rights, equal responsibilities and full representation in the U.S. Congress which makes the federal laws that they live under. Puerto Rico would be able to participate in U.S. Presidential elections to select the federal executive that implements the laws they live under. Puerto Rico would be treated equally under all federal laws, policies and programs ending the current situation of legalized discrimination against Puerto Rico under the current territory status.	This bill does not define any of the possible status options to be voted on or say how many could be presented to voters, leaving it up to the “Status Convention.” Beyond the known and understood options of statehood and independence, the bill’s sponsors also specifically express that they leave open the possibility of considering “any option other than the current territorial arrangement,” even though decades of federal executive and legislative branch findings show there are no other constitutionally valid alternatives to the territory status beyond statehood or nationhood.
Timeline	After bill passage a vote would be announced in 30 days by the Governor. Once the vote is held, if the certified results favored statehood, they would be sent to the POTUS, and the election for U.S. Senators and Representatives would take place. No less than 12 months after the certified statehood vote are certified, POTUS would issue a declaration announcing the admission of the new state. In total the process would take between 1 to 2 years.	Bill lacks a clear timeline for execution, which is deeply problematic. The lack of any limit on the number of status options, and the possibility of options that are not viable under the U.S. constitution being proposed, could lead to endless debate and an indefinite delay in decisions. The possible perpetuation of the current territory status against the will of the majority of voters for years, decades or even longer, because of a lack of timeline is fundamentally unjust.
Support in Congress	57 bipartisan co-sponsors in the House (43 D & 14R). 3 D co-sponsors in the Senate.	73 D co-sponsors in the House. 7 bipartisan co-sponsors in the Senate (5 D, 1I & 1R).
Support from Top Puerto Rico Officials, & National Parties	Has support of the Governor & Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico. Support from Puerto Rico Democratic Party and Puerto Rico Republican Party.	Opposed by the Governor & Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico. Opposed by the Puerto Rico Democratic Party and Puerto Rico Republican Party.
Cost to Execute	Approximately \$6 to \$8 million for plebiscite vote and the election of Senators and Representatives if statehood is ratified.	\$5.5 million for election of delegates. \$5 million for educational campaign. \$2.5 million for plebiscite. Unknown millions more for operating the Status Convention, delegate offices, travel, etc.