

**TOOLKIT**

**TAKE!**

**ACTION!**

**FOR PUERTO RICO!**

# WHAT'S INSIDE THE TOOLKIT



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**A**lmost two years ago, we could not have imagined the devastation and marginalization that our beloved Puerto Rico would endure. Hurricanes in the Caribbean are nothing new, but Hurricane Maria’s ferocity—super-powered by the realities of climate change—exposed the vulnerability of an island with a decaying energy infrastructure, an unfair relationship with the United States, and a profound financial crisis.

**Take Action for Puerto Rico! Year Two** brings together people and organizations to encourage discussion, generate ideas, and take action around critical issues for Puerto Rico’s recovery: empowered citizenship, health care equity, ensuring federal aid continues to flow, and economic redevelopment. So many of us want to help, and the goal of the Take Action for Puerto Rico! campaign is to productively channel our energy to achieve maximum impact for Puerto Ricans living on the island and for those displaced by natural and human-caused disasters.

**Take Action for Puerto Rico!** kicks-off in the lead up to the two-year mark of Hurricane Maria on September 20th and continues through October 20th, coinciding with Hispanic Heritage Month. The Take Action for Puerto Rico! Toolkit has the information and materials that you need to be an effective agent of change for Puerto Rico. Choose the areas that speak to you, about which you are the most passionate, and deliver the message that Puerto Rico deserves better:

- **Empowered Community:** Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, yet the aftermath of Hurricane Maria exposed the disparate treatment of the island’s citizens by their federal government on several fronts. In addition, the need for strong community oversight and transparency has never been greater, especially after the historic people-power protests that galvanized Puerto Rico over the Summer of 2019. Our Take Action for Puerto Rico! Toolkit provides all the information and materials you need to empower you, your fellow advocates and organizations to take action on behalf of Puerto Rico.
- **Ensure federal aid continues to flow:** The Trump administration continues to withhold Congressionally approved funding for the reconstruction of Puerto Rico two years after the most devastating natural disaster in the island’s history! The Take Action for Puerto Rico! Toolkit provides useful background information on which programs have been cut, why the need is still there, and all you need to know to take action now!
- **Health Care Equity:** Puerto Rico receives far less funding for federal health care programs than other US jurisdictions. Specifically, the federal share for Medicaid is artificially capped at a much lower rate than states, and Puerto Rican Medicare patients are excluded from the low-income prescription drug subsidy for seniors. The Take Action for Puerto Rico! Toolkit has all the information you need to advocate for full parity for Puerto Rico under federal health care and other programs.
- **Economic Redevelopment:** Puerto Rico is under historic financial distress, which has severely hampered the island’s ability to restart its own economy. The debt cannot be prioritized or come before basic needs such as housing, energy, healthcare, public health, and education. The Take Action for Puerto Rico! Toolkit explains why there should be a moratorium on debt repayments and negotiations until an independent audit has been performed and certified by non-governmental experts, and why Puerto Rico should be allowed discharge of any illegal or unconstitutional debt.

The TA4PR! Media & Policy Toolkit provides more information on how to amplify your groups’ message to reach wider audiences on this topic.

We are so grateful for your participation! **Take Action for Puerto Rico!** coalition partners are deeply invested in your efforts and success and are here to assist you with any request or information that you may have regarding your participation in this national campaign.

For more information or questions regarding **Take Action for Puerto Rico!**, please contact: [info@takeaction4pr.org](mailto:info@takeaction4pr.org).

# How Can I Get Involved in “Take Action for Puerto Rico!”?

**I**n la unión está la fuerza! Together we are strong and powerful! We invite you to join millions of people across the United States fighting for fairness, justice, and dignity for the people of Puerto Rico. With your help, we can build a stronger, sustainable and more resilient Puerto Rico.

- ◆ Take the first step by signing up on the website <http://takeaction4pr.org> to stay in touch and get the latest news
- ◆ Download the TA4PR ToolKit! Host a Community Forum or Teach-In for Take Action for Puerto Rico! Sign up at <http://takeaction4pr.org>
- ◆ Get loud on social media! Look here for [social media content](#) and [graphics](#).
- ◆ Organize and hold your own Press Conference to raise awareness about the ongoing recovery process in Puerto Rico and the need for federal agencies to disburse the approved funding in order the reconstruction of the island to be completed. Look for tips [here](#).
- ◆ Identify local Hispanic Heritage Month events and reach out to ensure Puerto Rico is included.
- ◆ Create a Puerto Rican-focused event for Hispanic Heritage Month in your community (i.e. festivals, dances, parades, concerts, etc) ... everyone loves a concerned individual who wants to make a difference.
- ◆ Register your event on the “Take Action for Puerto Rico!” website <http://takeaction4pr.org>
- ◆ Are you musically inclined? The protests in Puerto Rico this summer showed how social movements can be strengthened by music. Bring your musical instruments to a local FEMA office, federal building, or even a Trump property! [Download posters here!](#)
- ◆ Do you like a challenge? Are you creative and social media savvy? Help us make the Show Us Your Puerto Rico Policy campaign go viral! Tag your favorite(s) Presidential Candidate and ask them a Puerto Rico policy question with the #ShowUsYourPRPolicy hashtag.
- ◆ Sign the TakeAction4PuertoRico! coalition’s petition [here](#)
- ◆ Party like you mean it! You don’t need to be Puerto Rican to love Salsa dancing...so plan your own Salsería (salsa dance party) to raise awareness about Puerto Rico by handing out fast facts about the island to your guests and asking them to take action.
- ◆ Plan a “digital [cacerolazo](#)” by asking your friends and neighbors to demand that Congress expedite the recovery process in Puerto Rico. [Download graphics here!](#) Tag your Representative, Senators, and even President Trump! Here are some suggestions.
- ◆ Plan a fundraiser to benefit a local community group in Puerto Rico doing great things to help rebuild Puerto Rico’s future. Click [here](#) for a list of organizations to consider.
- ◆ Join (or help organize) local events happening on the week of September 20th and hold a moment of silence on Friday in honor of the more than 3,000 Puerto Ricans who died as a result of Hurricane Maria and the botched government response, click [here](#) to find an event near you.
- ◆ Join Power 4 Puerto Rico in a national Moment of Silence to remember the more than 3,000 who died as a result of Hurricane Maria at 9:20 AM on September 20.

**GET  
CREATIVE!**

**Share your idea!**

Send an email to your members asking them to get involved and to sign the petition.

# Puerto Rico History 101

## Why is Understanding Puerto Rico’s History Important?

The majority of people in the United States have only started thinking and learning about Puerto Rico as anything other than a vacation spot with beautiful beaches since Hurricane Maria struck the island two year ago. Puerto Rico has a rich and fraught history. Without understanding some historical context of the relationship with the U.S., it is hard to fully grasp the current situation.

We hope you enjoy learning about Puerto Rico, its history, and its people!

### Earliest Inhabitants

- The earliest inhabitants of modern-day Puerto Rico were ancestors of an [indigenous Caribbean people called Arawaks](#), who came from modern-day Venezuela. They settled in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic and are known as “[Taínos](#)” (which means “noble” in the Arawak language). They named the island “[Boriken](#)” and the people became known as Boricuas (boh-REE-kuh-wahs).

### Spanish Colonization

- [Columbus arrived at Boriken in 1493](#), and “claimed” the island for Spain, beginning four hundred years of colonization which included slavery, disease, and death for many of the original Taíno population. To this day, Puerto Ricans’ first language is Spanish and Catholicism remains the dominant religion.
- [Spain’s efforts to exploit Puerto Rico’s natural resources](#) and turn the island into a production center for crops like sugar and coffee resulted in the enslavement and depletion of its Taíno population, the adoption of a slave trade using people brought in from West Africa (present-day Gold Coast, Nigeria, and Dahomey), and the arrival of new infectious diseases such as smallpox.
- [In 1898, Puerto Rico finally became an autonomous](#) part of Spain with its first Puerto Rican Constitution.

### U.S. Takeover

- U.S. policymakers began expressing an interest in Puerto Rico at the end of the 18th century. In 1783, future U.S. President John Adams asserted that both Cuba and Puerto Rico were an ‘integral part’ of the U.S. trade in the Caribbean. His son, John Quincy Adams, later the 6th President of the U.S., stated in 1823 that the two islands were “[natural appendages to the North American continent](#).”
- [During the Spanish-American war in 1898](#), at almost the same moment in history that Puerto Rico achieved its first autonomy after 400 years of European colonization,

the U.S. bombed and invaded San Juan. In a bid to get Puerto Ricans to fight on the side of the U.S., a manifesto was issued promising to protect Puerto Ricans. Spain lost the war, and [Puerto Rico was “ceded” as a territory to the U.S. as part of the Treaty of Paris](#). In 1900, after less than two years of hard-won autonomous governance under Spain, the U.S. ignored the new, democratically-elected local parliament of Puerto Rico in favor of creating its own colonial system. Congress passed the [Foraker Act of 1900](#) to establish the legal framework for a civil government in “Porto Rico” [sic] under U.S. governance and taxation.

**“The Supreme Court argued that Puerto Rico and other territories “ceded” by the Spanish were full of “alien races” who couldn’t understand “Anglo-Saxon principles”**”

- During the U.S. continental expansion period, 31 territories applied for and were admitted as states. However, in 1901, [in a series of legal opinions \(“Insular Cases”\)](#), the Supreme Court argued that Puerto Rico and other territories “ceded” by the Spanish were full of “alien races” who couldn’t understand “Anglo-Saxon principles” and, therefore, the full measure of the Constitution did not apply to them. Puerto Rico was established as an unincorporated territory with no path toward statehood, leaving Puerto Ricans in limbo with no clear legal status (or passports) for decades.

### Political Parties in Puerto Rico

- Political parties in Puerto Rico are organized differently than the two major national parties in US politics. While Demo-

crats and Republicans are organized around shared policy views that can be placed in the Conservative-Liberal ideology spectrum, parties in Puerto Rico are organized around shared views on what the island's political relationship should be with the United States.

- The New Progressive Party (NPP) believes that Puerto Rico should become the 51st state of the union, while the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) believes that Puerto Rico should become an independent republic. The Popular Democratic Party (PPD) believes in continuing to develop the current status of Puerto Rico as a Commonwealth.
- It is important to highlight that party affiliation in Puerto Rico is not related to political ideology. In other words, you will find people from all over the political spectrum in each party on social and economic issues.
- Some recent examples:
  - In 2016, the candidates for Governor and Resident Commissioner of the New Progressive Party was a Democrat (Ricardo Rosselló) and a Republican (Jenniffer González), respectively.
  - From 2012-2016, the Governor and the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico were Democrats; however, Gov. García Padilla was a member of the Popular Democratic Party while Resident Commissioner Pedro Pierluisi was a member of the NPP.
  - From 2008-2012, the same thing happened in the NPP when Luis Fortuño (Republican) was the Governor and Pierluisi (Democrat) represented Puerto Rico in Congress.
- Local parties whose membership is not centered on the political status between the island and the United States, as well as independent candidacies, have started to gain some traction in Puerto Rico since 2008.
- In 2016, the first-ever independent Senator in the history of Puerto Rico was elected when Dr. José Vargas Vidot [received the most votes](#) for one of the At-Large seats in the Puerto Rico Senate. That same year, two independent candidates for Governor – Alexandra Lúgaro (11.13%) and Manuel Cidre (5.73%) – [received a sizable share of the votes](#).

### U.S. Citizenship

- In 1917, Congress passed the [Jones-Shafroth Act](#), which granted U.S. citizenship to all Puerto Ricans thereby [allowing the U.S. to deploy them as troops during World War I](#). The federal government believed that white people weren't

suitable to fight in tropical climates because they didn't have immunity to the tropical diseases. Instead, the [U.S. conveniently sent so-called Puerto Rican "immunes"](#) to defend the Panama Canal.

- Although Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens allowing them to fight for U.S. interests, [citizenship did not give them the right to vote for president](#) or to elect voting senators or representatives to Congress if they lived in Puerto Rico. \_New Source: (USA Today)Puerto Ricans fought for the American side in the [Revolutionary war](#), fighting among troops led by---

### Puerto Rican Participation in the U.S. Military

- During the Korean War, Puerto Ricans in the 65th Infantry Division, known as the Borinqueneers, obtained [at least 10 Distinguished Service Cross awards, 256 Silver Stars and 596 Bronze Stars](#).
- [There are currently approximately 330,000 veterans and some 35,000 Puerto Ricans in active duty service both in Puerto Rico and on the mainland](#). The Puerto Rico Army/ Air National Guard and the Reserve components represent another 10,000 Puerto Ricans in uniform. Altogether, at least 375,000 Puerto Ricans are veterans or are still wearing the uniform – [almost 80,000 veterans live in the island](#). That is without counting the several thousand serving in the national guard units of the 50 federated states of the Union.
- [Nine Puerto Ricans have been awarded the Medal of Honor](#), seven have been awarded the Navy Cross, and [eighteen have been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross](#).

### Puerto Ricans and Arbitrary Treatment

- From 1898 to 1946, Puerto Rico was ruled by Governors that were appointed by the President, who were not Puerto Rican, and the laws passed by the Puerto Rican legislature could be vetoed by the U.S. President.
- In 1946, [President Truman appointed the first Puerto Rican Governor, Jesús T. Piñero](#). In 1948, Congress passed the [Election Governor Act](#) and the first democratically elected Governor, [Luis Muñoz Marín](#), assumed office in 1948.
- In 1952, [Puerto Rico officially became a U.S. Commonwealth](#), after the people of the island drafted and ratified its own Constitution, a status which granted Puerto Ricans a degree of control over local affairs, but not full self-determination.
- Under the next period under the sovereignty of the United States, Puerto Rico's economy shifted, from agriculture to manufacturing. Investment by industries during the 60's and 70's transformed the economy of Puerto Rico in dra-

matic and positive ways. From being called the “[Poorhouse of the Caribbean](#)” in the 1940s when per capita income was only \$121, by the 1960s, income per capita had risen to more than \$3,000 per person per year.

- In 1976, Congress changed the tax code (Section 936), to attract mainland investors and corporations by allowing them to avoid paying federal taxes. This made investors very wealthy, but it also helped create higher paying jobs and an economic base for Puerto Rico. By 2006, [this tax credit was phased out by Congress](#), which led to the loss of more than 100,000 manufacturing jobs. Excessive borrowing by the Commonwealth to make up for the losses and continue paying for public services, caused, in part, the current economic recession and the snowballing financial/debt crisis.
- Puerto Rico receives disparate treatment when it comes to funding for federal healthcare programs, such as Medicaid. This is because the Island receives a block grant with far less funding than states receive. For example, in Mississippi, the poorest state, [the federal government pays 75.65% of the costs](#); in Puerto Rico, [it pays for 55%](#). Puerto Rico received a temporary increase under the Affordable Care Act (ACA or Obamacare) but that money ran out and Congress has been making short-term extensions since. If Congress refuses to provide equitable treatment for the Island under Medicaid, close to 1 million patients could lose their insurance or suffer significant reductions in benefits; setting up what is known as the [Puerto Rico Medicaid Cliff](#).
- Low-income seniors living in Puerto Rico are not eligible to participate [in the Medicare subsidy for prescription drugs \(Low Income Subsidy or LIS\) or eligible for long-term care provided to low-income seniors on the mainland](#).

### Puerto Rican Migration

- The first great migratory wave of Puerto Ricans to the mainland began in the mid-40’s and lasted for more than a decade, during which [more than 600,000 Puerto Ricans moved to the mainland](#).
- Puerto Rico is currently in the midst of another migratory wave, with [500,000 leaving the island between 2006 and 2016](#), and [more than 135,000 leaving in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria](#).
- According to the Center for Population Studies, 210,000 Puerto Ricans lived in Orlando by 2014. In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, an additional [100,000 Puerto Ricans traveled there](#).

### Puerto Rican Debt - The Passage of PROMESA

- In 1996, Congress began a ten-year phase out of [Section 936](#) of the Internal Revenue Code, which awarded generous tax credits and federal tax exemptions to U.S. manufacturing companies that operated in Puerto Rico and the territories. An economic recession started in Puerto Rico in 2006, the year that the phase-out was complete resulting in the loss of more than 100,000 jobs. The economic loss reduced the Commonwealth’s revenues to the point where [the government borrowed excessively to make up the difference](#) and to pay for basic services. A vicious cycle of borrowing to pay off old debt resulted in a total \$70 billion public debt and close to [\\$50 billion in unfunded pension liabilities](#).
- Another issue that aggravated the island’s debt issues was predatory Wall Street lending. According to a [Front-line PBS report](#), Wall Street firms engaged in irresponsible lending practices and pushed the government to borrow unsustainably, which further increased the island’s debt liabilities.
- [Puerto Rico does not have the same access to bankruptcy laws that U.S. states have](#). As Puerto Rico was approaching a financial cliff with the inability to service or restructure its debt, in 2016, Congress passed a bill known as [PROMESA](#), or the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act. This law created a Fiscal Oversight Management Board (FOMB), appointed by the United States President, with legal authority to exercise control over Puerto Rico’s fiscal affairs, and restructure the island’s \$70 billion debt.
- The undemocratic nature of the FOMB complicates the already thorny issues of Puerto Rico’s colonial status under U.S. sovereignty.
- PROMESA is deeply [controversial](#) because while it [allows Puerto Rico access to a court-supervised bankruptcy-like debt restructuring process](#), the law also curtails Puerto Rico’s self-governance and internal democratic processes because Congress gave the FOMB final authority over budgets and fiscal decisions.
- The FOMB has practically absolute powers over Puerto Rico’s budget - including the spending of all disaster funds. It can require the Puerto Rican government to [implement austerity measures](#) such as [severely cutting pensions, closing public schools](#), insisting on a work requirement for food stamp recipients, eliminating and [undermining labor rights](#) and pay raises, even [against the wishes of the elected officials](#) of the island’s Government.

- PROMESA also awarded the FOMB and the Governor the power to [reduce the federal minimum wage](#) in Puerto Rico to \$4.25 for workers who are younger than 26 years old. This has not come into effect yet.

### Democracy in action - the Summer of '19

During the summer of 2019 a series of events led to massive protests by the people of Puerto Rico that resulted in the [resignation of Governor Ricardo Rosselló](#). The protests were ignited [after the arrest by the FBI of two cabinet members](#) under corruption charges and the publication of a group chat in which Governor Rosselló and other top government officials made [cruel, racist, homophobic, and misogynistic comments](#) about various people.

The two weeks after the publication of the group chat saw the [build-up of protests](#) – both on the island and all across the world – calling for the resignation of Governor Rosselló. The movement was coined #RickyRenuncia and it [quickly became a trending topic in all social media platforms](#), while also capturing [the attention of the media](#). On July 22nd, more than half a million people took to the streets of Puerto Rico to demand the governor's resignation.

The protests by the Puerto Rican community were viewed worldwide as an example of democracy in action and were praised by their [creativity](#) and infectious energy. Puerto Ricans [danced, meme'd, rapped](#), and found every way possible to get the message across. This historic moment of unity, crossed political, demographic and socioeconomic lines in a way not seen before in Puerto Rico since the successful movement to stop the U.S. Navy from continuing to use the Puerto Rican island of [Vieques](#) for military target practice, after leaving a legacy of 60 years of contamination, disease, and abuse.





# Hispanic Federation UNIDOS Principles For a Just Recovery for Puerto Rico

## **JUST RECOVERY**

A just recovery must be in the hands of the people of Puerto Rico, led by the people, and for the people of Puerto Rico.

## **EFFECTIVE OVERSIGHT THROUGH TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Democratization of the recovery process is the best way to minimize corruption, fraud, and waste. Statutorily-required public participation that includes robust stakeholder analyses, and collaborative and mandatory public participation mechanisms during all phases of decision-making processes (i.e. needs assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring), and radical transparency are a democratic check on all actors - both local and federal - and a prerequisite to ensure federal dollars effectively reach impacted communities, and achieve the goals intended by federal funders. Good governance requires that federal and local contracts not be awarded to companies that have been convicted or fined for breaking any labor, environmental, or other federal or local laws.

## **PREVENT FORCED DISPLACEMENT**

The recovery and rebuilding process should prioritize mitigation before displacement. People should be allowed to elect to stay, choose where to relocate, and have a say in decisions that impact their communities. All communities should receive equitable and just access to resources and treatment, regardless of income, property value, location, or other qualifiers.

## **PROTECT HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS**

Rebuilding should not be an excuse for exploitation or for waiving any civil, human, or environmental rights in the name of speed - or greed.

## **REBUILD A STRONGER, SUSTAINABLE PUERTO RICO**

A sustainable and just recovery must focus on forward-thinking, community-driven solutions to minimize future devastation, ease recovery and set-up the island for success. Recovery efforts must meet the needs of the present community without compromising future generations by achieving a balance between economic, social, and environmental development.

## **DEBT RELIEF**

A just recovery is not possible when the priority is paying creditors instead of investing in the recovery and the future of Puerto Rico. The debt cannot be prioritized or come before basic needs and essential services. Without relief, Puerto Rico's \$73 billion debt, will make it impossible to rebuild the island's infrastructure and economy effectively (projected to cost upwards of \$100 billion). Puerto Rico and other disaster-ravaged U.S. territories must have a pathway to comprehensive debt relief and the ability to terminate debt obligation so they can recover and rebuild with dignity. Any benefits of projected federal disaster dollars should only be used for the benefit of the people of Puerto Rico - not the vulture funds and other creditors.

## **INDEPENDENT AUDIT**

The future of Puerto Rico must not be compromised by repaying debt that was illegally or unconstitutionally obligated. There must be a moratorium on negotiations or repayment of existing debt until the federal government has ensured an independent audit is performed and certified by non-governmental experts and allowed discharge of any illegal or unconstitutional debt. No funds provided for disaster recovery should be used to repay creditors, directly or indirectly, or to make economic projections for debt repayment.

## **REBUILD SMARTER: USE DISASTER FUNDING TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR A RENEWABLE ENERGY GRID**

The widespread destruction of the energy grid has created an opportunity to rebuild Puerto Rico in a more durable, resilient, and decentralized way based on renewable energy sources like solar. Everything possible should be done to help the island meet its goal of 100% renewable energy by 2050.

## **INVEST IN A SUSTAINABLE, LOCAL ECONOMY**

Greater efforts should be made to ensure that disaster funding has a multiplier effect by prioritizing local businesses and non-profit organizations to additionally strengthen local economies and communities. There should be every effort made to support retention of current jobs, invest in the growth and capacity of the small business sector, and prioritize local workforce development.

## **PROVIDE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO PROGRAMS THAT LIFT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OUT OF POVERTY**

Low-income Puerto Ricans living on the island should not be

treated differently from Puerto Ricans living in US states. Measures to lower child poverty in Puerto Rico by providing the same access to anti-poverty programs such as expanding the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and enabling low-income households to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) should be available to all Puerto Ricans regardless of where they choose to live. Under the CTC and EITC, individuals living in US states can receive refund checks from the IRS even if they do not owe any federal income taxes. All Puerto Ricans should have access to the same programs.

### **PROVIDE PARITY IN FEDERAL BENEFITS THAT PROVIDE BASIC HEALTH SERVICES**

Puerto Rico is facing a dire health care crisis. Inequities in federal health care funding are a major driver of this crisis. Approximately 60% of the island's population is enrolled in Medicaid or Medicare, both of which face a tenuous future due in part to an archaic and unfair capping of federal contributions imposed upon Puerto Rico, because of its status as a territory. To ensure the health of people in Puerto Rico, it is essential that we eliminate federal funding health care disparities and make large-scale investments to revitalize the infrastructure and operations in hospitals and community-health centers, and retain medical professionals on the island.

### **STRENGTHEN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY**

Hurricane Maria destroyed an estimated 80% of existing crops in Puerto Rico, which exacerbated the island's extreme and risky dependence on imported foods. Bolstering the island's agriculture sector and promoting resilient and sustainable local food production, and access to safe, potable water, is essential as communities in Puerto Rico recover. Adequate funding for nutrition assistance programs is also needed to ensure access to nutritious food and better health outcomes.

### **PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH TO PROSPER ACCESS TO QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION**

Children and youth in Puerto Rico have the right to a quality public education that will ensure equal access to personal, professional and labor opportunities. Quality public education is a key element in achieving an effective recovery, lowering poverty levels, and overcoming the economic crisis of the island.

### **SUPPORT PUERTO RICANS DISPLACED BY ECONOMIC AND NATURAL DISASTER**

Our concerns extend to Puerto Ricans who have been forced to leave the island to the states because of ineffective emergency relief, a slow recovery, and lack of employment. They are disaster victims and need ongoing support from national and local governments, and from philanthropic sources, to ensure a successful transition to the US or promote a safe return to the island.

### **FACILITATE SAFE RETURN TO THE ISLAND**

To recover long-term, Puerto Rico needs to retain and rebuild its social capital. As houses are rebuilt and businesses reopen, the federal government should work with Puerto Rico's government and community leadership to develop economic and social support plans that promote the return of evacuees and which are informed by the lessons learned from the post-Katrina process.

### **MARSHALL PLAN**

Our federal government has a moral and legal responsibility to help Puerto Rico recover. The only way the island can do so is if our federal government enacts a "Marshall Plan" and systematically invests tens of billions of dollars to rebuild, revitalize and revive Puerto Rico's health care system, economy, housing, public social services and infrastructure, including its energy grid, utilities, and telecommunications system.

# Why Puerto Rico's Fate Matters

## Fair Treatment for U.S. Citizens is Important for All U.S. Citizens

**P**uerto Rico is home to more than 3 million U.S. citizens who lack some of the basic rights and federal benefits of citizens living on the U.S. mainland. Equality and fair treatment is a fundamental American value. A lack of equal treatment under fundamental programs such as nutritional assistance, health care and others, can lead to poverty, systemic economic inequities, and generational disenfranchisement. The colonial relationship between the federal government and the island also leads to inherent inequities, such as the encroachment of self-government caused by the PROMESA federal law, for example. As citizens of the United States, people on the island of Puerto Rico deserve the same treatment as citizens living in the U.S. mainland.

Below are a few of the many ways that U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico are impacted by unfair treatment by their federal government:

### Federal Programs

- U.S. citizens living in Puerto Rico, [pay the same level of Social Security and Medicare taxes yet receive fewer benefits](#). For example, [Puerto Ricans do not qualify for Supplemental Security Insurance \(SSI\)](#), a benefit that low-income mainland residents receive to help disabled adults and children with limited incomes. Low-income, elderly people on Medicare also do not qualify for [prescription drug subsidies](#) that they would receive if they lived on the mainland. Medicare also does not pay for [long-term assisted living](#) care for the elderly, leaving many low-income elderly people living in precarious situations.
- U.S. citizens living in Puerto Rico do not have equal access to federal benefits such as the [Earned Income Tax Credit](#), the [Child Tax Credit](#), [SNAP benefits](#) for poor families with children, and Medicare payments for long-term care.
- Puerto Rico's federal healthcare funding is capped, and the [federal matching rate \(55%\)](#) is lower than what it would be if the island were treated as a state. This means that too many U.S. citizens who would qualify for healthcare if they lived in a U.S. state are not receiving the care that they need.
- As of July, 2019, Puerto Rico's official unemployment rate dipped below 10% for the first time in decades and is now at [8.1%](#), which is still much higher than the [3.7%](#) national average in the continental U.S.
- It is also important to note that the labor force participation rate in Puerto Rico is currently close to 40%, while the U.S. national average is [63%](#).
- The median household income in Puerto Rico is [\\$19,775](#), roughly one third of the [U.S. median income](#) of \$61,372.
- In 1996, Congress curtailed tax benefits for U.S. manufacturing companies that created 300,000 jobs in Puerto Rico. The phaseout of this program was a major driver of the economic and debt crisis Puerto Rico faces today. Making matters worse, in 2018, after Maria's devastation of the Puerto Rican economy, Congress passed a \$1.2 trillion [tax cut package](#) that applied new taxes on intangible assets for U.S. companies in Puerto Rico. This creates a perverse disadvantage, putting Puerto Rico at a competitive disadvantage with states and foreign countries.
- Even though Puerto Rico has fiscal autonomy, which means the island has its own tax system and most individuals residing there are exempt from paying federal income taxes, Puerto Rico has not been "allowed" to sign [economic treaties with other countries](#). Access to this tool has been repeatedly blocked by the federal government.
- A federal law passed in 2016, called [PROMESA](#), eroded much of the autonomy Puerto Rico gained under Commonwealth in 1952, by empowering an unelected board appointed by the President to have the final say over all financial and fiscal matters. In 2015, the Puerto Rico Governor said the debt was "[unpayable](#)" but the island did not have a debt restructuring mechanism to deal with the impending

### TAKEAWAY

*U.S. Citizens living in Puerto Rico are denied equal access to essential federal programs because.*

### Economic Barriers

- [44.4%](#) of the population of Puerto Rico lives under the federal poverty line, almost four times higher than the U.S. national average of [11.8%](#). (Source: US Census Bureau)

### TAKEAWAY

*Puerto Rico's economy, and the U.S. citizens who live in Puerto Rico, face undue economic challenges because of unfair policies.*

crisis. Congress is responsible for the inability of Puerto Rico to restructure the debt accumulated by public corporations and municipalities, since it mysteriously removed Puerto Rico from [Chapter 9](#) bankruptcy protections. Since Puerto Rico does not have access to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Congress refused to spend money to solve the problem, Puerto Rico was stuck in limbo without access to the tools to alleviate its debt burden. Given the lack of legal bankruptcy mechanisms, and the refusal by the [Federal Reserve](#) and [the U.S. Treasury Department](#) refusal to buy Puerto Rican debt or provide financial assistance, Congress passed PROMESA to restructure all of the Commonwealth's debts. Congress was willing to bailout Wall Street during the 2008 crash, but unwilling to help the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico in their hour of need. **The result was PROMESA and imposition of severe austerity measures strangling the island, forcing many to leave, and a crumbling social, educational, and economic infrastructure.**

### Fiscal Crisis & Congress

- In 2016, the U.S. Congress [passed a law](#) called [PROMESA](#) that created a Fiscal Oversight Management Board (FOMB) whose seven members are appointed by the U.S. President (with the exception of one appointed by the Governor of Puerto Rico). The FOMB [oversees and determines financial and budgetary policy in Puerto Rico](#), often over the wishes of Puerto Rico's elected Congress and Governor.
- The FOMB has the last word over fiscal, budgetary and other financial matters in Puerto Rico, and has imposed [severe austerity measures](#) resulting in ongoing cuts to [education, pensions](#), and benefits.
- Puerto Rico's public corporations and cities are excluded from the same bankruptcy protections as states, such as Chapter 9. Puerto Rico did have access to Chapter 9 bankruptcy [until 1984](#), when [Congress mysteriously and without a clear legislative intent](#), removed this provision from applying to Puerto Rico. This means that the essential services Puerto Rico relies on cannot be protected against claims by creditors who may want to raise rates, provoke deep cuts, and otherwise threaten the basic services working Puerto Rican families rely upon.

### Health Care

- Unlike in the states, where federal matching assistance percentage (FMAP) is applied at the appropriate rate for each state based on poverty levels, in Puerto Rico it is applied until the Medicaid ceiling funds and the Affordable Care Act available funds are exhausted. This leads to Puerto Rico paying far more in Medicaid costs than the states. In the poorest state, the federal government pays 75.65% of the costs (Source: [Medicaid.gov](#)); in Puerto Rico, it pays for 55%. (Source: [Medicaid.gov](#))
- In addition, although Puerto Ricans pay the same amount of payroll taxes as residents of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, low-income seniors living in Puerto Rico [do not participate in the subsidy for prescription drugs](#) that Medicare provides seniors on the mainland.

### TAKEAWAY

*No U.S. citizen living on U.S. soil should ever suffer the consequences of inexplicably high sickness and disease with limited abilities to pursue appropriate health care access.*

### Environmental Issues

- The U.S. citizens living on the Puerto Rican islands of Vieques and Culebra suffer from [disproportionately higher](#) rates of cancer and other diseases due to exposure to agent orange, depleted uranium and other contamination as a result of [U.S. Navy bombing](#) and training exercises on Vieques. The U.S. military [has not met its full responsibility of paying for the clean-up and decontamination of the islands](#), and the [U.S. military has claimed "sovereign immunity"](#) to avoid answering for the health claims of the citizens of these islands.
- Some of the energy production methods in Puerto Rico are also [causing toxic and environmental hazards](#) – not only to the island, but to the states as well. For example, the company AES operates a coal plant that dumped coal ash on the island until protesters and activists succeeded in banning it in 2017. Afterwards, AES tried to deposit the toxic ash in [St. Cloud, FL](#) but they [were stopped](#) by community members. [The ashes are now being sent to South Georgia](#).

# How You Can Help Puerto Rico:

Some of the most pressing issues, for displaced and current residents of the island, can be fixed by [passing legislation](#) in Congress to mandate greater transparency and meaningful participation of civil society in planning and decision-making, and by requesting the release of federal funding meant for the reconstruction of Puerto Rico. As individuals and organizations, we have the power to demand that the federal government [release the funding](#) that [was approved by Congress](#) and help the more than 3 million people living on the island.

## Things You Can Do to Help:

- Sign the [petition](#) calling on calling Congress to do more to help Puerto Rico!!
- Share the petition on your social media Tweet this! **“You can help the people of Puerto Rico today! Just take a moment to sign our petition calling on the federal government to take more action to help Puerto Ricans recover and rebuild. #TakeAction4PR #MarialsStilHere”** <http://takeaction4pr.org/sign-the-petition-2/>
- Schedule meetings in the district office of your Representative and Senator and talk to them about the ways that they can take action to help Puerto Rico. Here’s where you can find the contact information for your [Representative](#) and [Senators](#) (top left corner).
- Demand that federal agencies be required to contract with small businesses and require local hiring in Puerto Rico whenever possible.

**“ Without additional action at the federal level, it could take as long as a generation, or more, for Puerto Rico to rebuild its infrastructure and its economy. It’s in our power to pressure our Members of Congress into making sensible policy decisions that can help improve the lives of millions of people.”**

- [Call](#) or [tweet](#) at your Representative in Congress and remind them that their constituents care about Puerto Rico and expect them to care! #RememberPuertoRico.
- Call or write to your two Senators and ask them to support a [Marshall Plan for Puerto Rico](#) that provides the needed level of funding and [comprehensive blueprint to rebuild the island’s infrastructure](#) and economy. Use our [Talking Points](#).
- Call on Congress to hold oversight hearings into how the federal government determined what resources were needed for the rebuild and recovery of the island, and inquire whether there was sufficient and meaningful community engagement to determine if the solutions being presented

and the contracts being awarded are actually beneficial for affected communities. [Tweet this!](#)

- Demand that federal agencies be required to contract with small businesses and require local hiring in Puerto Rico whenever possible.

## Conclusion

Puerto Rico and its more than 3 million U.S. citizens face an incredibly difficult road to recovery. In addition to its \$70+ billion in debt, and crumbling infrastructure, the island and its people are now suffering from a health and humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

Without additional action at the federal level, it could take as long as a generation, or more, for Puerto Rico to rebuild its infrastructure and its economy [after María caused over \\$100 billion in damages](#). It’s in our power to pressure our Members of Congress into making sensible policy decisions that can help improve the lives of millions of people.

# Talking Points

**O**n the two-year mark of Hurricane Maria's devastating landfall in Puerto Rico, there is still so much work to be done. We need your help to advance our shared vision for a stronger, and more equitable and resilient Puerto Rico. Anyone can refer to these talking points when preparing for a meeting or a call with elected officials, when drafting your own op-ed or press release, or when speaking to the media.

## General

When Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, right on the heels of Hurricane Irma, we could not have imagined the devastation and marginalization the island would endure. Hurricanes in the Caribbean are nothing new, but Maria's ferocity—super-powered by the realities of climate change—exposed the vulnerability of an island with a decaying energy and social safety-net infrastructure, an unfair relationship with the United States, and a profound financial crisis. Hurricane Maria was the worst natural disaster in the island's history, resulting in the [longest blackout in American history](#), and killing at least [3,000](#) people.

## Oversight And Transparency

- Hurricane recovery funding should only be used to help individuals and communities affected by the storms. Federal relief dollars should not under any circumstances go to pay Puerto Rico's creditors, to cronies tied to politicians, or for any other purpose that is not rebuilding Puerto Rico. The reconstruction of the island must be conducted with transparency, the proper community oversight, and participation to ensure that the real needs of Puerto Ricans are met.

**“ Without additional action at the federal level, it could take as long as a generation, or more, for Puerto Rico to rebuild its infrastructure and its economy. ”**

- Making Puerto Rico stronger than it was before, both in terms of rebuilding its infrastructure and economic outlook, should be done in an independent manner free of political influence and special interest dealmaking. There are several models Puerto Rico could investigate to determine adequate engagement measures and oversight such as the independent [Lower Manhattan Development Corporation](#) after 9/11 or similar entities created to establish medium to long-term projects that focus on rebuilding, resiliency, and recovery.

## A just recovery

- In order for the recovery process to be sustainable and just, it must be community-driven and forward-thinking. The residents of the island have a better understanding of how to ease recovery and set-up the island for success. Recovery efforts must meet the needs of the present community without compromising future generations by achieving a balance between economic, social, and environmental development.
- Hurricane recovery funding should only be used to help individuals and communities recover and rebuild. Federal relief dollars should not under any circumstances go to pay Puerto Rico's creditors, to cronies tied to politicians, or for any other purpose that is not rebuilding Puerto Rico. The reconstruction of the island must be conducted with transparency, the proper community oversight, and participation to ensure that the real needs of Puerto Ricans are met.
- Recovery and rebuilding should not be an excuse for exploitation or for waiving any civil, human, or environmental rights in the name of speed – or greed.
- Democratization of the recovery process is the best way to minimize corruption, fraud, and waste. Measures that can be implemented to minimize the possibility of mismanagement of funds include: requiring public participation with robust stakeholder analyses, collaborative and mandatory public participation mechanisms during all phases of decision-making processes, and a prerequisite for public participation to ensure federal dollars effectively reach impacted communities, and achieve the goals intended by federal funders. [These radical transparency measures](#) are a democratic check on both local and federal actors, and should include requirements that contracts not be awarded to companies that have been convicted or fined for breaking any local or federal, labor, environmental, or other laws.
- A just recovery is not possible if decision-makers prioritize paying creditors instead of investing in the recovery and the future of Puerto Rico. The debt cannot come [before basic needs and essential services](#). Puerto Rico and other

disaster-ravaged U.S. territories must have a pathway to comprehensive debt relief and the ability to terminate debt obligation so they can recover and rebuild with dignity. Any benefits of projected federal disaster dollars should only be used for the benefit of the people of Puerto Rico – not the vulture funds and other creditors.

- [Hurricane Maria destroyed an estimated 80% of existing crops](#) in Puerto Rico, which exacerbated the island's extreme and risky dependence on imported foods due to the [restrictions imposed by the Jones Act](#). Adequate funding for nutrition assistance programs is needed to ensure access to nutritious food and better health outcomes. The promotion of resilient and sustainable local food production, access to safe potable water, and the bolstering of the island's agriculture sector is essential for Puerto Rican communities to recover.
- The federal government should also work with Puerto Rico's government and community leadership to develop economic and social support plans that promote the return of evacuees, and to ensure that the island can recover long-term by retaining and rebuilding its social capital.
- [Hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans moved from the island](#) to the mainland following the destruction of Hurricane María. Two years after the move, we still need to support the Puerto Ricans displaced by economic and environmental disasters by helping them transition to their new situation.

### Federal funding

- [Puerto Rico has not received its fair share of funding](#) from our federal government to rebuild its infrastructure, economy and other vital sectors.
- Government officials estimate that [\\$139 billion is needed](#) in order to rebuild the island's basic infrastructure and kickstart the economy. To date, Congress has allocated just over \$40 billion for recovery and rebuilding but as of September 2019 [has only sent \\$1.5 billion](#) for reconstruction, and only [\\$14 billion overall](#) (including FEMA funding).

### Unfair treatment

- The U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico should not be treated differently than U.S. citizens who live on the mainland and have suffered through natural disasters. Our message is simple: Congress should help rebuild the island, as they have done for Texas, Florida, New Jersey, California, and other devastated areas.
- It's essential that our federal government create a ["Marshall Plan"](#) for Puerto Rico that systematically invests tens of billions of dollars to rebuild, revitalize and revive Puerto Rico's

health care system, economy, housing, public social services and infrastructure, including its energy grid, utilities, and telecommunications system

Other ways Congress can aid in the economic recovery of the island include:

- Ensure that disaster funding cannot be used directly or indirectly to pay off any part of Puerto Rico's debt and demand debt relief from Puerto Rico's creditors.
- Expand the [Child Tax Credit](#) (CTC) and extend the [Earned Income Tax Credit](#) (EITC) to all eligible families in Puerto Rico. Treat Puerto Rico equally in Medicaid, Medicare, and other federal health programs. Puerto Rico's Medicaid program, in particular, [receives far less federal funding than states](#). Even though healthcare funding for Puerto Rico was extended in 2017, that [funding is set to expire at the end of 2019](#).
- Amend the tax code to ensure that Puerto Rico is treated fairly. The post-Maria [federal tax reform law](#) imposes new taxes on American companies operating on the island. Instead of impeding economic development on the island, Congress needs to make it easier for U.S. companies to invest, create jobs and help Puerto Rico grow.
- Puerto Rico is facing a dire health care crisis. [Inequities in federal health care funding are a major driver of this crisis](#). Approximately 60% of the island's population is enrolled in Medicaid or Medicare and are facing a tenuous future due to the unfair capping of federal contributions imposed upon Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories. Congress needs to eliminate federal funding health care disparities and make large-scale investments to revitalize the infrastructure and operations in hospitals and community-health centers, and retain medical professionals on the island.
- Without additional action at the federal level, it could take as long as a generation, or more, for Puerto Rico to rebuild its infrastructure and its economy and recover from this devastation.

### Self determination

- Congress must work with the government of Puerto Rico to develop and fund a federally-binding, democratic, [self-determination process](#) that guarantees the will of the people is implemented and includes viable options to move the island towards decolonization.
- Decolonization can be addressed by both immediate and long-term measures. First and foremost, the process can begin by removing colonial barriers to economic development and by providing full parity in federal programs. For example, Congress must:

- allow Puerto Rico to restructure/discharge its own debt
- eliminate disparities in the tax codes that disadvantage Puerto Rico economic competitiveness
- oppose efforts to provide additional authority to the unelected and undemocratic Fiscal Control Board created by PROMESA

### Debt

- The debt must be independently audited and certified. The future of Puerto Rico must not be compromised by repaying debt that was illegally or unconstitutionally obligated. There must be a moratorium on negotiations or repayment of existing debt until the federal government has ensured an independent audit is performed and certified by non-governmental experts, and allowed discharge of any illegal or unconstitutional debt. No funds provided for disaster recovery should be used to repay creditors, directly or indirectly, or to make economic projections for debt repayment.

### TA4PR! Campaign

- Take Action 4 Puerto Rico! is composed of grassroots advocates, faith-based leaders, labor unions, community-based organizations, public officials, and educators — and our goal is to encourage and elevate discussion, germinate ideas, and take action around the many critical issues for Puerto Rico's recovery including: radical transparency and community engagement and oversight, debt relief, health care equity, climate change preparedness, and economic redevelopment.
- Take Action for Puerto Rico! was launched in the lead up to the one-year mark of Hurricane Maria on September 20th, 2018 and continues all year long, with focused activity each year September 20th through October 20th, coinciding largely with Hispanic Heritage Month.

# Policy Asks: How the Federal Government and Congress Can and Must Help Puerto Rico

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**O**n September 20, 2017, Hurricane Maria - a Category 5 hurricane - hit the island of Puerto Rico causing thousands of deaths and billions of dollars in damage. 1.1 million people lost electricity in the longest blackout in U.S. history. For weeks and months on end, communities lacked communication and safe drinking water, creating a situation that devastated the economy, resulting in thousands of deaths, and leaving many people homeless, jobless, without access to life-saving medical care, or a roof over their heads. One [death toll](#) calculates the number of deaths related to the aftermath of the hurricanes to be nearly 3,000, far more people than Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which caused 1,833 fatalities. It is the deadliest hurricane in modern American history. (Some estimates put the number of deaths attributable to Maria over [4,500](#), although we may never know for sure the number of deaths that resulted.)

Our federal government has a moral and legal responsibility to help the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico recover just as it would help any other group of American citizens. The only way Puerto Rico can recover comprehensively is through the creation of a "[Mars-hall Plan](#)" for the island that provides the kind of resources needed to rebuild, revitalize, and revive Puerto Rico's infrastructure and economy for long-term stability and resiliency; a plan that centers community-based rebuilding at its core.

## 2 YEARS LATER - WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Two years after Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated Puerto Rico, the reconstruction of the island has barely started. As of August 2019, [30,000 homes](#) still had blue tarps instead of roofs. Two years later, the Trump Administration [has released](#) only a small fraction of the money Congress appropriated to support recovery and building. In September 2019, the Trump administration arbitrarily took away [\\$400 million](#) from the first line of defense in a disaster, the Puerto Rico National Guard, to build an unnecessary and divisive wall on the southern border. Two years later, roads, schools, traffic lights, have mostly received band-aids instead of long-term fixes and plans for many other basic elements of the island's infrastructure - especially its fragile energy grid - are not on the road to serious rebuilding or recovery. Two years later, the 8.4 million U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico, on the island and in the Diaspora, are waiting for their federal government to take the necessary steps to allow the island to seriously begin the long road to renewed prosperity.

Below you will find suggestions for how Congress can address current issues. Most of these recommendations require new legislative approaches, many of which haven't yet been proposed. In other cases, there is proposed legislation which address some of the issues, but not all. We must work together to require a more robust legislative agenda and real solutions from Congress.

## WHAT CONGRESS MUST DO

- 1) Stop allowing the federal government and the Administration to interfere with the will of Congress by intentionally preventing the rebuilding of Puerto Rico
- 2) Statutorily require effective oversight, transparency, and democratization of the recovery and rebuilding process
- 3) Reform current federal policies and practices that are inadequate and/or create barriers to accessing funds and to efficient and sustainable rebuilding.
- 4) Address the severe health care crisis, worsened by Maria, by removing inequities in federal health care funding, one of the major drivers of the debt crisis, and immediately fund Medicaid and Medicare at the same funding levels provided to other US citizens.
- 5) Provide the means and oversight to ensure an independent audit is performed and certified by non-governmental experts to determine the legality of the debt.
- 6) Ensure adequate investment to build a more resilient electrical grid in Puerto Rico that can use the abundant natural resources of solar and other renewable power on the island
- 7) Provide full parity in federal programs that address the social safety net as well as provide economic stimulus
- 8) Prevent granting any additional authority to the FOMB. Instead the FOMB must be directed to prioritize rebuilding Puerto Rico instead of paying creditors

### Stop allowing the Federal Government and the administration to interfere with the will of Congress by intentionally preventing rebuilding of Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico should not be singled out and critical relief funding should not be delayed because of unrelated incidents of corruption. The Trump administration should not create more barriers or additional layers of federal bureaucracy. Examples include:

- [Delay in mitigation funds](#) in HUD CDBG-DR
  - Congress [approved \\$20 billion](#) in Community Development Block Grant for Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR) for Puerto Rico in early 2018 and as of September 2019, [has only sent \\$1.5 billion](#) to the island.
  - HUD refused to send \$8.3 billion to Puerto Rico after [missing a Congressionally mandated September 4 deadline](#).
  - In total, Congress has approved \$40 billion overall for the recovery and reconstruction efforts in Puerto Rico, yet [only \\$14 billion](#) have actually been sent to the island.
- Instead of a presidentially appointed federal czar, there should be community oversight, engagement, and transparency.

### Statutorily require effective oversight, transparency, and democratization of the recovery and rebuilding process

Public participation and [radical transparency](#) that are statutorily required are a necessary democratic check on all government actors – both local and federal – to ensure that federal dollars get to the communities they are intended for and achieve what is intended, and as the best way to minimize corruption, fraud, and waste. The lack of transparency and meaningful public participation has greatly hindered the recovery of Puerto Rico for the past two years. The following mechanisms cannot be optional, and should be enforceable.

Real transparency requires:

- that information about disaster recovery dollars and decision-making processes be publicly available, easily accessible, objectively verifiable at all stages of decision-making including needs-assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring.
- that information be available in accurately-translated Spanish - the predominant language of the island - and in a timely manner.

Meaningful Public Participation requires:

- responsible stakeholder analysis and outreach strategies to ensure that people affected by decisions have the opportunity to express their opinions in a timely manner.
- notices about public participation must be timely and widely

available through multiple, locally-appropriate communication channels to ensure effective outreach to stakeholders.

- collaboration and input at all stages of decision-making including needs-assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring.
- enforceable accountability measures when public participation measures have not been met
- technical assistance for local groups to overcome additional hurdles to effective participation
- feedback and disclosure from all agencies about how public opinion and participation has - or has not - been analyzed and incorporated into final decisions, and why.

### Partial policy solutions:

- [National Commission on the Federal Response to Natural Disasters in Puerto Rico Act of 2019 \(H.R. 229 & S. 23\)](#)
- [Puerto Rico Data Collection Equality Act \(H.R. 1405\)](#)

### Reform current federal policies and practices that are inadequate and/or create barriers to accessing funds and to efficient and sustainable rebuilding

Despite Congressional action appropriating critical disaster funds for Puerto Rico, the Trump administration [is actively withholding funding](#) for Puerto Rico under HUD's CDBG-DR program. In fact, [HUD missed a September 4th deadline](#) to announce the release of badly needed mitigation funds, in the middle of hurricane season for the island.

- Every plan for disaster funding approved by federal agencies must comply with effective, mandatory oversight criteria for public engagement and transparency.
- Congress [should extend waivers of local matching fund](#) requirements for the life of the need.
- Congress must eliminate the [‘pay-first, get reimbursed later’](#) requirements under recovery programs which limits communities' opportunities to apply for such funds.
- Congress must direct FEMA to remove arbitrary procedures not imposed on other jurisdictions (such as imposing the [unrealistic deadline of mid-October](#) 2019 for technical assistance fixed cost estimates, and removing the ability to [revise cost estimates](#) after a project has begun).
- Greater efforts should be made to ensure that disaster funding has a multiplier effect by prioritizing local businesses and non-profit organizations (including local hiring requirements) to additionally strengthen local economies and communities.
- Funding should be available to provide capacity building assistance to local businesses and non-profit organizations to increase their opportunities to compete for federal funding.
- Federal contracts should not be awarded to companies that have been convicted or fined for breaking any labor, envi-

ronmental, or other federal or local laws.

- Applications for federal programs and funding must be made available [in accurately-translated Spanish](#).

### Partial policy solutions :

- [Reforming Disaster Recovery Act of 2019 \(H.R. 3702 & S. 2301\)](#)
- [National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2019 \(H.R. 3167\)](#)
- [FEMA Modernization Act of 2019 \(H.R. 3060\)](#)

### Address the severe health care crisis, [worsened by Maria](#), by removing inequities in Federal health care funding, one of the major drivers of the debt crisis, and immediately fund medicaid and medicare at the same funding levels provided to other US citizens

Puerto Rico is [facing a dire healthcare crisis](#). Inequities in federal health care funding are a major driver of this crisis.

- Approximately [60% of the island's population](#) is enrolled in Medicaid or Medicare, both of which face a tenuous future due in part to an archaic and [unfair capping of federal contributions](#) imposed upon Puerto Rico, because of its status as a territory.
- To ensure the health of people in Puerto Rico, it is essential that we eliminate [federal funding health care disparities](#) and make large-scale investments to revitalize the infrastructure and operations in hospitals and community-health centers, and [retain medical professionals on the island](#).

### Robust policy solutions:

- [Territories Healthcare Improvement Act \(H.R. 3631\)](#)
- [Medicaid and CHIP Territory Transparency and Information Act \(H.R. 3634\)](#)
- [Territories Health Equity Act of 2019 \(S. 1773 & H.R. 1354\)](#)
- [Puerto Rico Health Care Fairness, Accountability, and Beneficiary Access Act of 2019 \(H.R. 3371\)](#)
- [Contracting Credit Equality Act of 2019 \(H.R. 3428\)](#)
- [Disaster Relief Medicaid Act \(H.R. 3215\)](#)
- [Fairness in Medicare Part B Enrollment Act of 2019 \(H.R. 2310\)](#)
- [Puerto Rico Federal Matching Requirement Equity Act of 2019 \(H.R. 2241\)](#)

### Provide the means and oversight to ensure an independent audit is performed and certified by non-governmental experts to determine the legality of the debt

Congress should provide the means and oversight to ensure an [independent audit](#) is performed and certified by non-governmental experts to determine the [legality of the debt](#). The debt cannot be prioritized or come before basic needs such as housing, energy, healthcare, public health, and education.

- There should be a moratorium on [damaging debt repayments](#) and negotiations until an independent audit has been performed and certified by non-governmental experts, and allowed discharge of any [illegal or unconstitutional debt](#).
- Puerto Rico and other disaster-ravaged U.S. territories must have a pathway to comprehensive debt relief and the ability to terminate debt obligation so they can recover and rebuild with dignity.
- Any benefits of projected federal disaster dollars should only be used for the benefit of the people of Puerto Rico – not the vulture funds and other creditors.

### Robust policy solutions:

- [United States Territorial Relief Act of 2019 \(S. 1312 & H.R. 2526\)](#)

### Ensure adequate investment to build a more resilient electrical grid in Puerto Rico that can use the abundant natural resources of solar and other renewable power on the island

The federal government needs to ensure adequate investment to build a more resilient electrical grid in Puerto Rico that can use the abundant natural resources of solar and other renewable power on the island, [instead of relying so heavily on diesel, other fossil fuels, and centralized generation](#).

- Congress gave FEMA the power to rebuild a more resilient energy grid by amending the Stafford Act.
- FEMA must be directed to work with HUD and the relevant agencies on the island to actually exercise this authority when spending federal dollars to rebuild the grid and comply with [local laws and goals to achieve 100% renewable power generation by 2050](#).
- [HUD must be immediately forced to release the monies appropriated by Congress](#) to assist in rebuilding the energy grid.

### Congress must provide full parity in Federal Programs that address the social safety net as well as provide economic stimulus Low-income Puerto

Ricans living on the island should not be treated differently from Puerto Ricans living in US states.

- [Measures to lower child poverty in Puerto Rico by providing](#)

[the same access](#) to anti-poverty programs such as expanding the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and enabling low-income households to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) should be available to all Puerto Ricans regardless of where they choose to live.

- Under the [CTC](#) and [EITC](#), individuals living in US states can receive refund checks from the IRS even if they do not owe any federal income taxes. All Puerto Ricans should have access to the same programs.
- Puerto Rico has not participated in the SNAP program since the 1980s - and therefore receives less funding than states for nutritional assistance - under the [Nutritional Assistance Program](#) (NAP or PAN in Spanish). After Hurricane Maria, and the hunger thousands faced as a result, Congress temporarily increased funding to cover the additional need. This funding lapsed for six months and [was temporarily extended](#) in the Summer of 2019 for the rest of the year only after a prolonged advocacy campaign led by community-, business and government leaders forced the issue in Congress. The [Equitable Nutrition Assistance for the Territories Act of 2019](#) would provide a permanent solution by restoring SNAP-level funding for Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories.

### Robust policy solutions:

- [Child Tax Credit Equity for Puerto Rico Act of 2019 \(S. 698\)](#)
- [Equitable Nutrition Assistance for the Territories Act of 2019 \(H.R. 1576 & S. 677\)](#)
- [Earned Income Tax Credit Equity for Puerto Rico Act of 2019 \(H.R. 754\)](#)
- [Small Business Contracting Credit Act of 2019 \(H.R. 3372\)](#)
- [Working Families Tax Relief Act of 2019 \(H.R. 3157\)](#)

### Prevent granting any additional authority to the federal oversight board created by promesa. Instead the fomb must be directed to prioritize rebuilding puerto rico instead of paying creditors

A just recovery is not possible when those in power prioritize paying creditors instead of investing in the recovery and the future of Puerto Rico. The debt cannot be prioritized or come before basic needs and essential services. For example, instead of investing in a stronger, more resilient energy grid, the recent [PRE-PA debt restructuring deal](#) approved by the FOMB will [increase costs](#) for consumers in order to satisfy creditors.

- Providing additional authority to the FOMB is completely unacceptable as a response to the local government's recent transition.
- [Austerity measures](#) imposed as a mechanism to assist in debt negotiations are incompatible with a healthy recovery

and strong future. Basic needs and essential services must be defined and fiercely protected and include housing, energy, healthcare, public health, and education.

- The FOMB and the local government of Puerto Rico should not be allowed to include projections of federal disaster funding in any [economic scenarios used to calculate debt repayments](#). Any benefits of projected federal disaster dollars should only be used for the benefit of the people of Puerto Rico – not the [vulture funds](#) and other creditors.
- All members, contractors, and employees of the FOMB must be required to publicly disclose to Congress any conflicts of interests.

### Partial policy solutions:

- [United States Territorial Relief Act of 2019 \(S. 1312\)](#)
- [Puerto Rico Recovery Accuracy in Disclosures Act of 2019 \(H.R. 683 & S.1675\)](#)

# Legislation That We Need Your Member of Congress to Support

## [United States Territorial Relief Act of 2019](#) (S. 1312)

Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) – along with Senators Sanders (D-VT), Gillibrand (D-NY), Harris (D-CA), and Markey (D-MA) – [introduced S. 1312 in May, 2019](#). The legislation would allow U.S. territories to terminate their public unsecured debt if they meet certain criteria, it would also create a committee to audit the debt, and would appropriate funds to compensate eligible creditors in the mainland and Puerto Rico. A House companion bill with the same name, [H.R.2526](#), was introduced by Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-NY) and 10 other House Members.

## [Reforming Disaster Recovery Act of 2019](#) (H.R. 3702 & S. 2301)

This bipartisan bill - introduced by Rep. Al Green (D-TX) and Rep. Ann Wagner (R-MO) in the House – will help ensure that the Community Block Development Grants - Disaster Recover (CDBG-DR) better serve low-income communities by focusing on marginalized communities that get hit the hardest by natural disasters. H.R. 3702 would ensure greater data transparency and oversight, protect civil rights and fair housing, encourage disaster mitigation and resilience, and help target survivors that were affected the most. Senators Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Todd Young (R-IN) [introduced](#) a companion bill in the Senate ([S. 2301](#)).

## [Territories Healthcare Improvement Act](#) (H.R. 3631)

H.R. 3631 was introduced by Rep. Darren Soto (D-FL), and co-sponsored by 11 other Members of Congress, including Rep. Velázquez (D-NY), Resident Commissioner Jenniffer González (R-PR- At Large), and Rep. Bilirakis (R-FL). If passed, the Territories Healthcare Improvement Act would appropriate \$3 billion per year for 4 years to fund the Medicaid program in Puerto Rico, and allow [an increase to Puerto Rico's federal matching rate](#) from 55% to 83% in 2020 and 2021, and then 76% in 2022 and 2023.

This bill would also increase the federal matching rates of the other U.S. territories, and implement program integrity measures including payment error rate measurements and a new asset verification system.

## [Territories Health Equity Act of 2019](#) (S. 1773 & H.R. 1354)

The Territories Health Equity Act of 2019 was introduced by Senator Sanders (D-VT) in June, 2019 with eight co-sponsors in-

cluding Senators Warren (D-MA), Gillibrand (D-NY), Klobuchar (D-MN), and Booker (D-NJ). The bill would [eliminate the annual federal Medicaid funding cap](#) that limits the amount of Medicaid funding Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories can receive. It would also increase the federal matching rate of their Medicaid expenditures, increase funding to provide prescription drugs to low-income seniors, and update hospital reimbursement rates.

Rep. Stacey Plaskett (D-V.I.-At Large) introduced a companion bill in the House of Representatives (H.R. 1354).

## [Equitable Nutrition Assistance for the Territories Act of 2019](#) (H.R. 1576 & S. 677)

Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-NY) and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) [introduced this bill](#) to restore Puerto Rico's, American Samoa's, and the Northern Mariana Islands' access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In the early 1980's Puerto Rico was removed from SNAP and given a block grant – which meant less funding and benefits for residents of Puerto Rico when compared to other SNAP recipients. This legislation would provide equitable food assistance to residents of Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories.

## [Medicaid and CHIP Territory Transparency and Information Act](#) (H.R. 3634)

This bipartisan bill was introduced by Del. Sablan (D-MP-At Large) would order the federal Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS) to publish and update information related to federal expenditures under Medicare and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in all of the U.S. territories. The bill looks to rectify [a lack of data](#) and reporting information of the Medicaid programs in the islands.

## [Small Business Contracting Credit Act of 2019](#) (H.R. 3372)

This legislation was introduced by Rep. Velázquez (D-NY) to incentivize the contracting of Puerto Rico-based small businesses by spurring investment in local businesses and projects. The bill would achieve this by doubling the [contracting credits received by subcontractors when they hire Puerto Rican businesses](#).

## [Contracting Credit Equality Act of 2019](#) (H.R. 3428)

The Contracting Credit Equality Act – introduced by Rep. Velázquez (D-NY) – would give contracting credit to agencies and businesses that contract small businesses located in Puerto Rico,

and extend the credit to the other U.S. territories.

### **Child Tax Credit Equity for Puerto Rico Act of 2019** **(S. 698)**

Sen. Bob Menéndez (D-NJ) and Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) introduced this bipartisan bill to ensure Puerto Rican parents receive the same tax break provided to families living on the mainland. The bill would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 so that [those with one or two children would receive the same child tax credit treatment](#) as those with three or more children.

### **Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (H.R. 3215)**

Rep. Donna Shalala (D-FL), and Resident Commissioner González-Colon (D-PR-At Large) introduced the "Disaster Relief Medicaid Act (DRMA) to ensure seniors displaced from their homes by natural disasters and forced to relocate in other states [continue to have uninterrupted access to Medicaid](#). This bill prevents loss of care for individuals and assist states with managing mass migrations of people displaced by natural disasters.

### **Puerto Rico Health Care Fairness, Accountability, and Beneficiary Access Act of 2019 (H.R. 3371)**

H.R. 3371 was introduced by Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-NY) to offer both a short-term and long-term fix to Puerto Rico's Medicaid funding gap. If passed, [the bill would provide \\$15 billion in federal funding](#) to allow the federal government to match 83% of the island's Medicaid program starting in 2020. After 2024, Puerto Rico would begin a 10-year transition period where the island would receive the same financial treatment in the Medicaid program as the states, while also requiring Puerto Rico to cover mandatory benefits that are currently not covered.

[To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for payments to possessions of the United States related to the application of the earned income tax credit in such possessions \(H.R. 3307\)](#)

Rep. Pascrell (D-NJ) introduced this bill that would provide a federal supplement to Puerto Rico's local EITC program, and fund EITC education and outreach to the island. The legislation would create a similar program to supplement the other U.S. territories.

### **Working Families Tax Relief Act of 2019** **(H.R. 3157)**

The Working Families Tax Relief Act of 2019 was introduced in the House by Rep. Kildee (D-MI) and a companion bill [was introduced in the Senate](#) by Senators Brown (D-OH), Bennet (D-CO), Durbin (D-IL) and Wyden (D-WA). If passed the bill would expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) programs by 25% in the United States and would provide a federal match to Puerto Rico's local EITC.

### **Puerto Rico Recovery Accuracy in Disclosures Act of 2019 (H.R. 683 & S.1675)**

PRRADA was introduced by Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-NY) with the purpose of eliminating possible conflicts of interest by professionals that are contracted by the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board (FOMB). The bill would order all FOMB contractors to disclose to the US Department of Justice any relationships or previous work with debtors, creditors, persons of interest, and the FOMB and its employees. Contractors would have to file the disclosure form before receiving any compensation for their work.

A companion bill ([S.1675](#)) was introduced by Senator Menéndez.

### **National Commission on the Federal Response to Natural Disasters in Puerto Rico Act of 2019** **(H.R. 229 & S. 23)**

This legislation would create a national commission to examine the federal government's response to Hurricane María. The commission would analyze the government's preparedness, response, and recovery activities and compare them to the response in the other U.S. jurisdictions affected by hurricanes in 2017.

A companion bill (S. 23) was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Gillibrand.

### **National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2019 (H.R. 3167)**

The National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act was introduced by Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) to legislate a five-year reauthorization of the program and avoid the lapses in insurance coverage that have occurred due to Congress only approving short-term reauthorizations. It also increases funding for mapping, mitigation assistance to communities, and an affordability demonstration program provide premium discounts to low-income policyholders.

### **Fairness in Medicare Part B Enrollment Act of 2019** **(H.R. 2310)**

The legislation introduced by Resident Commissioner González (R-PR-At Large) would eliminate late enrollment penalties under part B of the Medicare program for individuals residing in Puerto Rico if they enroll within 5 years of becoming entitled to benefits under part A of Medicare.

### **FEMA Modernization Act of 2019 (H.R. 3060)**

This legislation was introduced by Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX) in an effort to reform the range and type of assistance provided by FEMA to disaster victims. Some of the measures included in the bill are the creation of a Disaster Emergency Housing Assistance Grant Program, and making permanent the FEMA Office of Disaster Response and the FEMA Office of Disaster Recovery. The FEMA Modernization Act would also create a new National

Disaster Medical Triage Capacity and an Incident Medical Recovery Management Team, and an ombudsman for each FEMA office.

### **Puerto Rico Air Cargo Industry Empowerment Act (H.R. 2357)**

The Puerto Rico Air Cargo Industry Empowerment Act seeks to lift air cabotage restrictions in Puerto Rico. According to Resident Commissioner González (R-PR-At Large), who introduced the bill, the lifting of air cabotage restrictions would allow for more domestic and international flights to stop in the island and thus create more jobs, similar to how the [Stevens Amendment](#) is credited with [creating jobs in Alaska](#).

### **Puerto Rico Federal Matching Requirement Equity Act of 2019 (H.R. 2241)**

This bill introduced by Resident Commissioner González (R-PR-At Large) would order the federal government to treat Puerto Rico as a state for the purpose of determining the Federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) under the Medicaid program which would increase the amount of federal healthcare funding received by Puerto Rico.

### **Puerto Rico Data Collection Equality Act (H.R. 1405)**

This bill – [introduced by Resident Commissioner González](#) (R-PR-At Large) and Rep. Serrano (D-NY) – will require all federal statistics agencies to include Puerto Rico in all federal statistical programs. The bill directs the head of the U.S. Interagency Council on Statistical Policy and all federal agencies to take the necessary steps to collect and publish statistics regarding the island as they do with all U.S. states and the District of Columbia. Having access to this data will benefit policymakers, local and federal agencies, and the public and increase transparency.

### **Earned Income Tax Credit Equity for Puerto Rico Act of 2019 (H.R. 754)**

This bipartisan bill introduced by Resident Commissioner González (R-PR-At Large) would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to residents of Puerto Rico. Co-sponsors of the bill include Representatives Soto (D-FL), Serrano (D-NY), Velázquez (D-NY), and García (D-IL).

# Response of the Federal Government to Puerto Rico

**A**lmost two years ago, in September 2017, two devastating Hurricanes hit the island of Puerto Rico in quick succession. Just weeks after Hurricane Irma left two-thirds of Puerto Rico without power, [Category 4 Hurricane Maria](#) arrived with 150 MPH winds and departed as the worst natural disaster in the island's history. As a result, the 3.2 million U.S. citizens who called Puerto Rico home, struggled to live through the [longest blackout in U.S. history](#) - thousands did not survive.

The U.S. government response [was slow and underwhelming, especially when compared](#) to the assistance offered after Hurricane Harvey, which ravaged Texas and the southeast. Numerous analyses show that the disaster response to the three hurricanes did not align with storm severity and may affect deaths and recovery rates. For example, see [Less hurricane aid, slower response to Puerto Rico than Texas, Florida](#), and [How Trump favored Texas over Puerto Rico](#) (illustrated here).

The highly-publicized article "[Mortality in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria](#)," the result of a collaboration between the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the University of Colorado School of Medicine, and Carlos Albizu University in Puerto Rico, suggests that the death toll could be higher.

- [\\$20 billion in HUD Community Development Block Grant \(CDBG\) funds](#) have been approved for Puerto Rico. As of September 2019, [less than \\$1.5 billion in funding has been allocated](#).
- The Trump administration recently [diverted \\$400 million in recovery funding](#) meant for Puerto Rico to fund the building of a wall on the border with Mexico. The move also [affected 127 military construction projects](#).
- The Puerto Rican government's estimate for the total [damage caused by the Hurricane is \\$129 billion](#). The Financial Oversight and Management Board (FOMB), which currently manages Puerto Rico's finances has said that the island [needs an estimated \\$80 billion for recovery purposes](#). Further estimates indicate that Puerto Rico could receive a total [of \\$91 billion over several years in relief funds](#), however, less than half of that has been allocated by Congress, and it has only received a fraction of that so far.
- After dragging their feet implementing the Temporary Shelter Assistance (TSA) program to provide housing assistance to displaced families in the immediate aftermath of Maria, FEMA tried repeatedly to [terminate the program](#) which would leave families displaced on the mainland homeless. For nearly a year, thousands of families lived miserably [in hotel rooms](#) as FEMA [refused to activate](#) its longer-term housing assistance program, DHAP, or [Disaster Housing Assistance Program](#). FEMA's attempts to terminate emergency housing assistance were temporarily prevented by a [court order](#) but a judge [later ruled](#) that the final eviction date was September 13, 2018.
- [79% of applications for FEMA aid under its Individuals and Households Program have been denied](#). Of 43,380 appeals submitted by July 13, 34,332 were denied and classified as ineligible, mainly because [FEMA would not recognize the type of property ownership documents](#) largely considered valid under Puerto Rican law.
- Numerous [complaints](#) have been filed with HUD's Office of the Inspector General, for among other things, alleging that the Puerto Rico Action Plan for Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds approved by HUD [failed to address any disaster mitigation strategies](#), focusing instead on the relocation of families in flood plains; and because documents and notices not being published in Spanish, in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1994. None of these complaints have been adequately responded to by HUD as of Sept, 2019.
- Numerous reports have highlighted that [FEMA had a lack of trained personnel in Puerto Rico – while sending highly qualified staff to Texas](#) for Hurricane Harvey's response – and had a [shortage of bilingual workers](#) that could communicate in Spanish with the island residents.
- According to [FEMA's own after-action report](#), the agency's contingencies took into account a much weaker storm than Maria, an underestimation that had grave consequences for the island, and showed how unprepared the agency was to handle a natural disaster of this magnitude in Puerto Rico.
- [In FEMA's simulated scenarios](#) for a hurricane hitting Puerto Rico, only 73% of the population lost power, only 56% of

hospitals would be affected, and search and rescue efforts would take place in 75% of the island. In reality, 100% of the island lost power, 92% of hospitals were affected, and rescue efforts were made across 99% of Puerto Rico.

- On January 17, 2019, [HUD Deputy Secretary Pam Patenaude quit](#) due to her refusal to follow orders from the White House asking her to [block the disbursement of CDBG-DR funding](#) that had been approved by Congress for recovery efforts in Puerto Rico.

**Supplies and aid delivered by FEMA nine days after each storm:**

	MEALS	WATER (IN LTS.)	TARPS	PERSONNEL SENT
TEXAS (HARVEY)	5.1 MILLION	4.5 MILLION	20,000	30,000
FLORIDA (IRMA)	10.9 MILLION	7 MILLION	98,000	22,000
PUERTO RICO (MARIA)	1.6 MILLION	2.8 MILLION	5,000	10,000

- Federal staffing in Maria took [3x times as long](#) to reach comparable levels as in Texas, and 30x times as long to reach comparable levels as in Florida.
- A study by the University of Michigan showed that the federal response to Irma and Harvey was ["faster and more generous than the help sent to Puerto Rico."](#) The same study found that while at its peak FEMA had 31,000 staffers respond to Texas , while 40,000 responded to Irma in Florida during the first 180 days post-hurricane. By comparison, at its peak during the same period, there were 19,000

# Texas After Harvey

## VS.

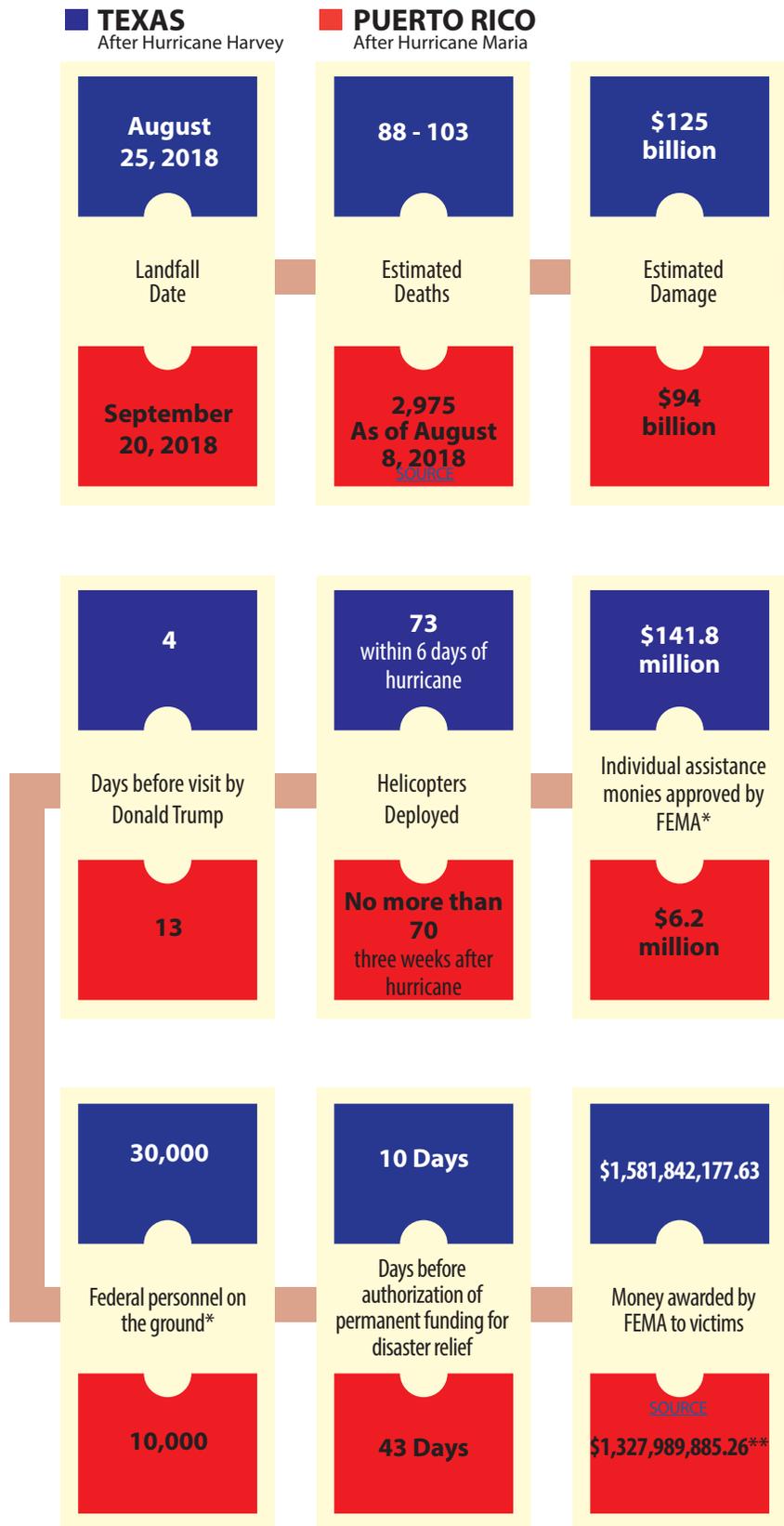
# Puerto Rico After Maria

The millions of Americans who call Puerto Rico home have lived through the longest blackout in U.S. history and the longest blackout ever. Almost a year ago, in September 2017, two devastating Hurricanes hit the island of Puerto Rico in quick succession. Just weeks after Hurricane Irma left two-thirds of Puerto Rico without power, Category 4 Hurricane Maria arrived with 150 MPH winds and departed as the worst natural disaster in the island's history.

The U.S. government response was slow and underwhelming, especially when compared to the assistance offered after Hurricane Harvey, which ravaged Texas and the southeast. The numbers speak for themselves.

<sup>1</sup>The highly-publicized article "[Mortality in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria](#)," the result of a collaboration between the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the University of Colorado School of Medicine, and Carlos Albizu University in Puerto Rico, **suggests that the death toll could be higher than 4,500.**

**Note:** Except where noted, figures were obtained from the Politico article [How Trump favored Texas over Puerto Rico](#)



**ADDITIONAL FACTS**



- **\$20 billion** in HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds have been approved for Puerto Rico. Of these, \$1.5 billion have been allocated thus far. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- **The Puerto Rican** government's estimate for the total damage caused by the Hurricane is \$125 billion. The Fiscal Oversight Board, which currently manages Puerto Rico's finances has given an estimate of \$80 billion and further estimates that Puerto Rico could receive a total of \$62,500,000,000 in relief funds. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **More than 135,000** Puerto Ricans relocated to the continental U.S. in the first six months after the Hurricane. ([Source](#))
- **Roughly 1,700** Puerto Ricans would have been evicted from the shelters provided by FEMA's Temporary Shelter Assistance (TSA) program when that aid was set to expire on June 30, 2018. A temporary restraining order extended the housing assistance period until August 30, 2018 but a judge later [ruled](#) that the final eviction date will be September 13, 2018. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **79% of applications** for FEMA aid under its Individuals and Households Program have been denied. Of 43,380 appeals submitted by July 13, 34,332 were denied and classified as ineligible, mainly because of applicants lacked the deeds to their properties. ([Source](#))
- **According to FEMA's** after-action report, the agency's contingencies took into account a much weaker storm than Maria, in which 73% of the population would lose power, instead of 100%, search and rescue efforts would take place across only 75% of the island, instead of 99%, and 56% of hospitals would be affected, rather than 92%. ([Source](#))

Additional Sources: Politico.com; El Nuevo Día; Far from Recovery: Puerto Rico Six Months after Hurricane María (Oxfam)  
 \* Nine days after hurricane  
 \*\*As of March 23, 2018



# We Are All Puerto Rico

## How Does Puerto Rico Fit Into Your Mission?

**W**hile most organizations are aware of the crisis in Puerto Rico, many may not be up-to-date on the current situation and needs on the island. Groups, like yours, are natural allies that can share information with your constituency and expand political support through your important and powerful networks.

The speed at which civil society groups were able to react and assist Puerto Rico, in some cases within days - and weeks ahead of FEMA and other government disaster response agencies - spell out the crucial role you have played and the difference you can still make in Puerto Rico's recovery.

Here are a few examples of how the current situation in Puerto Rico aligns with your organizational mission and interests, ideas about organizations that you can connect with, and how to explain why your members and communities should be interested in Puerto Rico's cause.

### Faith Based Organizations

- [Faith-based institutions are often on the front lines](#) serving populations in need of assistance. These organizations can and should use their moral authority to call on Members of Congress and others, to be responsive to the needs of Puerto Ricans in this time of tremendous hardship and tragedy. They can use their platforms to make sure the people of Puerto Rico are not forgotten, such as newsletters, sign on letters, sermons, etc.
- [Jubilee USA](#) – a coalition of religious, development and advocacy groups – has been at the [forefront](#) in [the fight for debt relief](#), budget relief, and the auditing of the debt. Like Jubilee USA, other faith-based groups believe that their religious values demand that they fight inequality in order to defend the most vulnerable.
- Catholic, Jewish, and Evangelical faith-based groups all responded immediately to the humanitarian crisis on the island. Examples include [ISRAaid](#) the Puerto Rico chapter of the Jewish Community Center(JCC), Caritas of Puerto Rico, a member of Catholic Charities, *Centro Cristiano Discipulos de Cristo*, and *Salon de Asambleas de los Testigos de Jehova*, among many others. Faith-based organizations on the mainland were also the first ones to open their doors to Puerto Ricans that fled the hurricane.
- Even if the need for emergency supplies has passed, the process of rebuilding remains a long-term proposition. Many faith-based institutions have Puerto Rican parishioners with leadership/membership on the mainland who care and are ready and willing to assist the Puerto Rican community on the island from their own parish.

### Organized Labor

- [Organized labor has been key drivers and advocates for recovery in Puerto Rico](#). Besides being on the front lines of delivering supplies, rebuilding infrastructure they have been working with their Puerto Rican members on the mainland and in Puerto Rico [to demand a just recovery](#).
- Organized labor has a special understanding that injustice towards one group/class of people is a threat to all people. Their experience in organization and deployment of resources is the perfect partnership to help Puerto Rico as it moves toward its recovery and economic growth.
- Organized labor groups are engaged in civic participation and organizing and can influence elected officials/decision makers by working in solidarity with their brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico to support their efforts to rebuild and protect U.S. citizens living in Puerto Rico.
- Many labor organizations have Puerto Rican membership who are active within their leadership and many members acted as a lifeline right after Hurricane Maria. Besides providing basic emergency supplies, volunteers from SEIU, National Nurses United, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), among others, were key in life-saving relief efforts in Puerto Rico days after Maria. Many like AFT and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), have continued their commitment to assist in rebuilding and advocating for policy changes.
- The PROMESA bill, passed by Congress, set a dangerous precedent in Puerto Rico for undermining labor organizing and was opposed by many unions. It allows the Fiscal Oversight Management Board (FOMB) and the Governor of Puerto Rico to [lower the minimum wage to \\$4.25 an](#)

[hour](#) for workers younger than 26 years of age. It also empowers a “revitalization coordinator” to designate “critical infrastructure” projects that can be approved on a fast-track basis, and thus avoid compliance with several environmental, labor, and other regulations.

### Environmental Groups

- The devastation of the hurricanes in Puerto Rico and severe climate elsewhere is impacting the natural environment and creating a whole new population of climate refugees within the United States and across the world - [with an estimated 135,000 leaving the island since September 2017](#).
- Hurricanes Irma and Maria severely impacted local drinking water and the surrounding environment. In the aftermath of the disaster, people [resorted to drinking](#) potentially contaminated water from those sites.
- Puerto Rico faces some unique challenges when it comes to toxic hazards [as a large portion of the waste on the island comes](#) from its once-booming pharmaceutical industry.
- Some of the energy production methods in Puerto Rico are also [causing toxic and environmental hazards](#) – not only to the island, but to the states as well. For example, the company AES operates a coal plant that dumped coal ash on the island until protesters and activists succeeded in banning it in 2017. Afterwards, AES tried to deposit the toxic ash in [St. Cloud, FL](#) but they [were stopped](#) by community members. [The ashes are now being sent to South Georgia](#).

**“The devastation of the Hurricanes in Puerto Rico and severe climate elsewhere is impacting the natural environment and creating a whole new population of climate refugees within the United States and across the world.”**

- Environmental groups should also be concerned about the fast-tracking mechanism mentioned above, allows the unelected Fiscal Board to designate certain infrastructure projects they deem “critical” to be able to avoid complying with certain environmental regulations. This sets a precedent that future boards could apply to cities, counties, and other jurisdictions across the continental US.

### Groups that Care About Adequate Nutrition, Housing, Health, and Children

- Different groups across the United States have also joined in the fight to ensure that the residents of Puerto Rico have access to adequate nutrition, affordable housing, and comprehensive healthcare.
- [The Food Research and Action Center](#) (FRAC) have worked with our community to ensure that Puerto Rico’s Nutritional Assistance Program (NAP) receives adequate funding, and that people in the United States know how to [take action](#) against the Trump administration’s efforts to reduce nutritional assistance funding.
- The [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#) (NLIHC) has also been a steadfast ally of Puerto Rico through their work with the [National Disaster Recovery Coalition](#) that focuses on ensuring that the federal government prioritizes the housing needs of low-income survivors. Their work with Puerto Rico [includes expressing their concern](#) with FEMA’s Individual Assistance in the island, [calling on Congress](#) to ensure that the Puerto Rican people have the power to determine and direct their own recovery, and [hosting panels](#) to discuss the impact hurricane Maria had on children.
- [The Coalition on Human Needs](#) has been advocating for the needs of the Puerto Rican children affected by hurricane Maria by [shedding a light on the problems they are facing](#), providing updates on the matter, and elevating the issue in front of stakeholders.

### Social Justice and Civil Rights Groups

- Social justice and civil rights groups care about the equitable treatment of marginalized groups. Due to Puerto Rico’s unique status with the United States, Puerto Ricans on the island are often treated differently – often in an arbitrary way – when prioritizing essential personnel and resources after disasters. Numerous [studies](#) concluded that the federal government’s response to Hurricane Maria and Irma was [slower](#) and less generous than in other [U.S. jurisdictions](#) affected by disasters.
- Those who fight for justice and against second-class citizenship need to educate themselves about the inequities, now playing out in ongoing recovery efforts, in order to advocate on behalf of communities impacted by Maria, and ensure the same priority is given to all affected by disasters, no matter their skin tone, language, or economic status.

### African-American Groups

- Puerto Rican culture is strongly influenced by its Afro-Latino roots. In fact, [20 percent of Puerto Ricans](#) trace their roots back to Sub-Saharan Africa.

- Most of the rest of the population have African ancestry, often mixed with native Taíno and/or European heritage. Puerto Ricans come in all shapes, sizes, and colors.
- The unfair and often arbitrary treatment of Puerto Ricans, and its disparate outcomes, is similar to that experienced by most communities of color in the U.S. who have faced [systemic inequalities](#) – rooted in racism – in areas like [housing](#), [healthcare](#), and the [environment](#).
- [Arturo Alfonso Schomburg](#), who was Puerto Rican of African and German descent, was a writer, historian, activist, and cultural promoter. Schomburg was born in Puerto Rico in the late 19th Century and moved to New York City where he continued to advocate for Puerto Rican and Cuban independence. He also founded several organizations focused on fighting for the civil rights of African Americans. His collection of Afrocentric artifacts helped create the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.
- [The American Federation of Teachers](#) (AFT) and the [Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico](#) (AMPR) have been active in recovery efforts since Hurricane Maria hit. Schools served as vital points for shelter, for distribution of supplies, and centers of recovery in the weeks after Hurricane Maria. AFT and AMPR, in partnership with Hispanic Federation and various non-profits, [raised more than \\$2 million to purchase water filters](#) that were delivered to schools and communities in need of clean water.
- AMPR teachers were [cleaning and repairing schools across Puerto Rico](#) before even FEMA had landed in their cities. With supplies sent from mainland unions and charities, teachers were cleaning classrooms and getting lunchrooms ready to give kids sanctuary to recover and learn.
- AFT, AMPR and Hispanic Federation working hand-in-hand with other partners have been advocating for the needs of Puerto Rico's children in front of Congress even as the Trump administration has been pushing efforts to close and privatize schools.

### Latino Groups

- Puerto Ricans are the second largest Latino group in our nation and have been engaged, at the forefront of fighting for the rights, well-being, and empowerment of Latinos and other all across our nation. In New York city, Puerto Ricans are seen as the pioneers who paved the way for other Latino groups to enjoy rights they would not be able to exercise were it not for the struggles the Puerto Rican community waged for decades. LatinoJustice PRLDEF, for example, started as a Puerto Rican-focused organization and is now among the most prominent national Latino legal defense funds fighting for immigrant rights, as well as the rights of Hurricane Maria evacuees and others.
- Efforts to divide DREAMers from Puerto Ricans in Congressional legislation that forced Members of Congress to choose between hurricane relief for Puerto Rico and other affected jurisdictions and avoiding the termination of DACA show how Latinos need to unite and not allow others to divide them. These efforts to divide us were rejected by the Puerto Rican members of Congress, and the overwhelming majority of Hispanic congressional members..

### Teacher's Groups

- Amid protests from parents, teachers and communities Puerto Rico has [has closed 265 schools](#) and many others simply never reopened after the hurricanes displacing tens of thousands of students and teachers. Only 4% of the money allocated by Congress to help reopen Puerto Rico's schools has been released by the Dept. of Education.

### Other allies

- Many other kinds of organizations, such as LGBTQ groups, [have shown support for Puerto Rico](#) in the initial aftermath of the hurricanes and are proven allies of the island. There have also been countless efforts by individuals in Puerto Rican diaspora communities to organize and provide assistance and support.

### Tips for Reaching Out to Ally Groups

- Your first step is identifying what group and who within that group you need to reach out to. The more members/leaders in an organization you know, the better chance you have of gaining their support.

### Establish Trust

- Your first step is identifying which group and who within that group you need to reach out to. The more members/leaders in an organization you know, the better chance you have of gaining their support. Always start with reaching out to the "low hanging fruit" as it will be easiest and help you develop your pitch.
- Trust can be acquired or transferred. When you reach out to a group or organization, you will usually have better luck when you know someone within that group or know someone who knows someone in that group.
- Explain to your contact "the what and the why" you want to connect with the group and ask them how you should introduce yourself

## Meeting with the Organization

- Create a meeting outline for yourself so you have notes going in and can cover all your points.
- Be prepared with facts on the current needs of Puerto Rico and status of the recovery effort (example: homes are still in need of repairs).
- Explain why their organization/membership should be concerned with the crisis in Puerto Rico.
- **Be sure to make a clear “ask” of the organization so they know how they can be of help.** Also ask for their ideas on who else you can speak to in their organization or another that could be of help.
- Offer to provide them with talking points and any additional material they need.
- Make sure to collect contact information (email, phone numbers) of the people you meet with.

## Follow Up

- Send a thank you follow up email to the meeting leader and be sure to copy any additional attendees as well as the individual who assisted you in setting up the meeting.
- Your thank you email should also outline any follow up you discussed and time-frame for deliverables on your end and theirs.
- The larger the organization, the more important administrative staff are to ensuring successful outreach and engagement. You may want to reach out to the assistant of the organization’s leader to ensure proper follow up.
- Your “ask” of the organization needs to be clear, but should be fluid enough to not come across as imposing. The goal is to cultivate a coalition of allies that can support Puerto Rico and each organization may have a unique way of supporting this common goal.

## HERE ARE JUST A FEW EXAMPLES OF “ASKS” YOU CAN MAKE:

- Share information on how their membership can help via organizational newsletters or social media.
- Share literature/handouts at organizational meetings.
- Allow you to speak in front of their group to share information.
- Have their organization’s leadership reach out to their Members of Congress and ask them to assist Puerto Rico.
- When they do reach out to Members of Congress, suggest they include one or more of the “asks” we include in the policy section of this toolkit.
- Ask them to promote your event, to join in a Call-In Day, or to distribute a petition.
- Ask them to author or co-author an op-ed with you to demonstrate to the public that there is broad support for Puerto Rico.



# 10 Ways You Can Take Action

Join Us if You Think that U.S. Citizens in Puerto Rico Deserve Our Help!

**T**wo years after the deadliest natural disaster in modern U.S. history, Puerto Rico still has not recovered. We need your help to ensure that every day counts and that your Member of Congress understands that Puerto Rico is part of the greater American family, that these U.S. citizens need our help, and that we are not afraid to get involved and hold them accountable.

- 1. Petition.** Sign and distribute the “Take Action for Puerto Rico! [Petition to Congress](#).”
- 2. Town Halls.** Attend your Member of Congress’ Town Hall and ask questions about their role in Puerto Rico’s recovery efforts or organize your own!
  1. Check [here](#) to see if your member is attending a Town Hall.
  2. Make the most of your time and the biggest impact for your efforts with this Guide to Town Halls ([Indivisible](#)).
- 3. Congressional Call-In Day.** Organize a Congressional Call-In Day on Sept 20th, and on the 20th of each month, with your friends and neighbors to let them know their constituents care about Puerto Rico.  
Call 888-724-8791 to be connected to your representative to remind your elected officials that you care about Puerto Rico.  
Calls to congressional offices are usually short and sweet, so you have to be prepared with your topline message. Although calls are usually short, if you want more background, you can find talking points and policy asks [here](#) and [here](#).
- 4. In-District Meetings.** Call your Member of Congress/Senator’s local district office to request a meeting to come in and talk about Puerto Rico. Let them know that their constituents care about Puerto Rico. Click [here](#) to find your Member of Congress’ local district office. Click [here](#) to find the nearest state office of your Senators. Refer to the talking points in this toolkit to guide your conversation with your congressional office. Ask your member to submit an “Extension of Remarks” regarding his or her support for Puerto Rico (an “[Extension of Remarks](#)” means your Member of Congress will make a statement for the Congressional Record about your cause or organization.)
- 5. Proclamations.** Secure a proclamation from your state or local elected official(s), declaring “We Are Puerto Rico Day.” Be sure to send out a press release about it! Find a sample [here](#).
- 6. Tweet-a-Thon or [Twitter Town Hall](#).** If you like to tweet, then do your own Congressional Tweet-a-thon on Sept 20th, the 20th of each month, or any day to let Congress know that people have not forgotten about Puerto Rico! (See sample social media [here](#) and download graphics [here](#). Keep checking back for updated messaging.)
- 7. Op-ed or Letter to the Editor.** Write an op-ed or Letter to the Editor for your local paper or website. See [here](#) and [here](#) for tips and samples. .
- 8. Stay Informed.** TEXT “TakeAction4PR” to 21333 to stay updated about ways you can help Puerto Rico.
- 9. Support a Non-Profit Organization in Puerto Rico.** There are many organizations doing extraordinary work supporting communities in the island since before Hurricane Maria. To learn more, please go to: [www.takeaction4pr.org](http://www.takeaction4pr.org)

## PHONE SCRIPT FOR CONGRESSIONAL CALL IN DAY

**CALL** your [Member of Congress and Senators](#), and ask to speak to the staffer in charge of Puerto Rico or emergency preparedness. When you call, it's very important that you say that you are a constituent and that you take down the name, email and title of the person you spoke with. You will stay in touch with this person and this will be your point of contact as you develop your relationship with this office.

**SAY:** Hello, my name is XXXX, and I live in your District/State. I am calling on behalf of the more than XX Puerto Ricans\* who live here and who have U.S. citizen relatives and friends living on the Island. Can you tell me what steps your office has taken to help rebuild and secure a vibrant Puerto Rico?

- \* [Use this link to get the number of Puerto Ricans who live in your state or congressional district.](#) **NOTE:** This database uses pre-Maria population levels from 2016 Census information. Anywhere from 135,000-300,000 Puerto Ricans moved to the continental U.S. after Maria so there are likely more Puerto Ricans living there now.

# Media Samples, Tips and How-Tos

## This document contains a wealth of resources including:

- [Sample Media Advisory](#)
- [Sample Press Release](#)
- [Tips for Organizing a Press Conference](#)
- [Sample Social Media Posts and Suggested Hashtags](#)
- [Sample Op-ed and Letter to the Editor](#)
- [Tips for Interactions with the Media](#)

## Why Do We Want the Media to Know What We are Doing?

Getting the news media to cover your event or do a story on the issue you are pushing will go a long way to attract attention to our shared cause. This will help reach larger audiences, which can translate into a larger base of support for what you are doing. Shaping public opinion is also important because it will help persuade policymakers that there is public support for the issues you are promoting.

Outreach to reporters is not difficult if you follow this simple guide on how to write and distribute media advisories, press releases, set-up a press conference, and much more.

## What is a Media Advisory?

A media advisory answers the “5 Ws” or Who, What, When, Where, and Why of an event and serves as an invitation for journalists to attend the event. This is sent to the media when you want to publicize an event and invite media-coverage (get “earned-media” as opposed to “paid media”). Think about what would make your event interesting to cover. (Sample below)

## What is a Press Release?

A press release is a document that provides newsworthy information directly to journalists. A press release is usually sent to members of the media right after the event happens and should include the key takeaways, quotes, and messaging of the event. Use your own voice but keep message clear.

See Take Action for Puerto Rico! Talking Points [Here](#) (Sample below)

## Tips for Crafting a Press Release:

Always include:

1. Your organization/coalition logo.
2. The date the press release is distributed.
3. If you don't want the information to be reported yet write “Embargoed until” and the date.
4. Contact information for the media point person for the organization/event. (This person must be reachable and responsive to media calls.)
5. 1-2 quotes from speakers/attendees.
6. “###” at the end of the press release to signal that the information is complete.

The headline is key. Most reporters have 30 seconds to scan a release. They want the news to jump out at them.

Summarize your news into a headline. The headline can be up to four lines long, centered, in boldface and written all in capital letters, usually in a larger type size. The headline should capture the larger frame of the news, communicate a sense of drama and pull reporters into the story.

After the headline, the first paragraph – “[The Lede](#)” – is critical. This is the summary paragraph that communicates the most important components and frames the issue for maximum media impact. Do not try to explain everything in this paragraph.

**“ Outreach to reporters is not difficult if you follow this simple guide on how to write and distribute media advisories, press releases, set-up a press conference, and much more. ”**

Write the remainder of the press release in descending order of importance. In journalism, this is called the “inverted-pyramid” style of writing. The most important, base-laying news goes at the top, the less important details below.

Frame your news – By the end of the lead paragraph, establish its importance impact and your position. At the latest, your news should be framed by the end of the second paragraph.

## MEDIA ADVISORY TEMPLATE

(Insert organization's logo here)

**Contact:** First Name, Last Name  
**Phone Number:** XXX-XXX-XXXX  
**Email:** juan.rivera@email.com

For Planning Purposes  
 September 20, 2019

### **Puerto Rican Association of Miami Commemorates 2nd Anniversary of María by Hosting Panel on Puerto Rico's Recovery**

[Miami, FL] – On September 22, 2019, from 11:00 am to 2:00pm, the Puerto Rican Association of Miami-Dade (PRAM) will host a panel titled: Two Years After Maria: An Update on Puerto Rico's Recovery. The panel will be hosted by local journalist Pedro Rivera, and will bring together community leaders from both the island and the Diaspora. The panelists will provide the audience an update of the ongoing recovery efforts in Puerto Rico, and discuss how members of the Diaspora can engage Congress and the federal government to support those efforts.

**Who:** Puerto Rican Association of Miami

**What:** Two Years After Hurricane Maria: An Update on Puerto Rico's Recovery

**When:** 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM | Sunday, September 22, 2019

**Where:** The Idea Center  
 315 NE 2nd Ave.  
 Miami, FL 33132

## SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

(Insert organization's logo here)

**Contact:** First Name, Last Name  
**Phone:** xxx-xxx-xxxx  
**Email:** your email@email.org

September 22, 2019  
Press Release  
For Immediate Release

### **Miami Puerto Ricans Come Together to Learn, Mobilize to Assist Recovery Efforts in Puerto Rico 2 years after deadly Hurricane Maria**

*Local activists joined Island residents to chart path-forward*

**MIAMI, FL** – The Puerto Rican Association of Miami (PRAM) hosted an event today that featured Puerto Rican community leaders from both the island and the Diaspora. The event, commemorating the two-year anniversary of Hurricane Maria, was held to provide an update on the ongoing recovery process in Puerto Rico, and to discuss how the Puerto Rican community living stateside can continue to assist during this critical phase of the recovery process.

"We are proud to be hosting this panel in Miami, home to hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans. Two years ago, Hurricane Maria caused tens of billions of dollars in damage, and while recovery efforts are ongoing, events like these are needed to provide both an update on what is happening on the island and a blueprint on how members of the Diaspora can mobilize to help," said José Marrero, President of PRAM.

The event was held at the Miami Dade College Ideas Center and is part of a larger national effort called **Take Action 4 Puerto Rico** that is being organized by Hispanic Federation. Speakers included Leslie Rodríguez, Executive Director of Diaspora Action; Mario Morales, the President of the Puerto Rico Community Center, and organizers from various communities in Puerto Rico.

"I am so glad that the Diaspora has continued to be supportive of the residents of the island. When I was asked to participate in the panel and to bring organizers that can talk about the issues facing the different communities in Puerto Rico, I was ecstatic," said Mr. Morales. "We need more discussions like this so we can join forces and ensure that the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico have access to the resources they need to rebuild, more than two years after Maria."

Recovery efforts are still ongoing almost two years after Hurricane Maria - a category 5 hurricane - devastated the Island of Puerto Rico causing thousands of deaths and billions of dollars in damage. While Congress has appropriated a significant amount of money meant for the recovery of the island, the federal government has slowed down, and at times right out halted, the disbursement of the federal funding that many communities so desperately need.

"We need to harness the power of the more than 5 million Puerto Ricans that are living stateside," said Leslie Rodríguez. "Many in our community want to help with the recovery efforts but don't know how. This panel gave us the chance to come together and think about concrete steps that we can take that could make a difference for people living on the island."

###

For more information on the Take Action for Puerto Rico! campaign, please go to [www.takeaction4pr.org](http://www.takeaction4pr.org).

## TIPS FOR ORGANIZING A PRESS CONFERENCE

- **Determine the purpose of the press conference:** What do you want to speak about? Why is it important for others to hear what you are saying?
- **Determine your Audience:** Knowing who your target audience is - who needs to hear your message the most - will determine a lot of other aspects of the event like who gets invited to speak, the location of the event, and other aspects.
- **Date, Time, and Location:** Make sure that when you pick a date and time there are no other big events scheduled that might bump out the coverage of your event from the news. Try to schedule press conferences in the morning, and avoid scheduling anything in the afternoon and evening when reporters are on a deadline.
- **Speakers:** Try to have between 3-4 speakers at the event. The first speaker should act as host, provide key messaging, and introduce the other speakers. Typical speakers might include an Executive Director or another key staff member, a board member, a public official, celebrities, or a local politician. One of the speakers should be an “expert”.
- **Keep the event short!** Anything longer than 45 minutes will make everyone lose interest.
- **Practice:** Hold a dress rehearsal with the speakers and make sure you provide them with talking points that they can use for answering questions from the media. Also, practice some of the answers to questions that members of the media might ask speakers.

## TIPS FOR INTERACTIONS WITH THE MEDIA

- **Be Prepared:** Make sure that you practice the talking points that have been crafted for the event. Ask yourself: What do we want to communicate? SEE Take Action for Puerto Rico! Talking Points [here](#).
- **Keep It Simple:** Try to talk in short complete sentences that can be used for sound bites and quotes. If there are multiple people being interviewed, members of the media will want to include short quotes to feature everyone.
- **Stay Alert:** Remember that everything you say in front of journalists or members of the media can and will be used for their reporting. Avoid making any comments that you might regret being made public.
- **Ask for Contact Information:** Always ask for a name, media outlet, and an email or phone number you can use to contact the reporter/journalist. It’s always good to know which media outlets covered the event and that you have the contact information needed to reach out in case you need to clarify something.
- **What and Why:** Make sure to mention what happened, but most importantly, why it happened. The “what” can always be reported by journalists but the “why” should always be communicated by the newsmaker.
- **News hook:** Always strive to highlight why the story you are pitching is relevant to the reporter’s audience. Also, try to tie it to other current events making headlines and emphasize why your story is different than others. Reporters are always looking for different angles and “scoops” that other media outlets have not yet picked up on.
- **Listen:** Always take time to listen to what the journalist is saying or asking. Sometimes we start answering questions in our head before the question has been asked.
- **Speak Slowly and Clearly:** Take your time answering. Remember that the media is there talking to you and that there is no need to rush the answers.

## SAMPLE OP-ED AND LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**O**n September 20, 2017, a Category 5 hurricane destroyed the U.S. Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The disaster that followed – due to both natural and man-made causes – is a lesson for all Americans, not just the U.S. citizens of the island of Puerto Rico.

Hurricane María, which was preceded by another Category 4 storm, Irma only two weeks prior, caused the longest blackout in U.S. history, left more than 3 million people in the dark for months – some for almost the entire year – and displaced over 135,000 Puerto Rican evacuees who moved to the states due to the inhuman conditions on the ground. The death toll is calculated at anywhere between 3,000 and over 4,500 and its effects are still being felt by the destruction left behind.

Hurricane María has been appropriately dubbed “Trump’s Katrina” because of the President’s disparaging comments about Puerto Ricans who supposedly wanted “everything done for them” and who allegedly were “throwing our budget a little out of whack.” This administration’s failure to respond quickly, adequately, and with the necessary resources to aid the millions whose lives were upended, was not only his personal failure, but it left a stain on our nation. This hurricane was not only a wake-up call on how ill-prepared our nation’s emergency response system is to devastating natural disasters. It was also a helpful reminder that Puerto Rico is an integral part of our nation’s fabric and that the U.S. citizens that live there, most of whom are Latino and speak Spanish as their first language, need to be treated fairly by our government.

How do we advocate and tackle the myriad of problems facing Puerto Rico? First, we must educate ourselves as to the complex and vexing challenges resulting from the often-unfair treatment of Puerto Rico by our federal government. That is why the organization I lead, Chicanos de South Bronx en Acción, is joining the Take Action for Puerto Rico! campaign.

What does Puerto Rico need our government to do? We must treat the disaster wrought by María’s wrath the same way we would treat any disaster, with a Marshall Plan. The hurricane left warzone-like conditions on the island. Entire communities were disconnected from the electrical grid, telecommunications networks, and access to food and water. If one considers the fact that the island’s government is bankrupt and faces extreme budget cuts and austerity programs, the only solution is to implement a comprehensive Marshall Plan. This plan would: rebuild Puerto Rico by investing in infrastructure, provide robust community participation and oversight, forgive Puerto Rico’s \$70 billion debt, restart economic growth, provide federal health care funding equity, and ensure that the federal disaster funding goes to communities in need, not Wall Street hedge funds.

The task to rebuild Puerto Rico to a better place than it was before Hurricane María will not be easy. It is up to all of us to help right the wrongs that our federal government has inflicted upon the people of Puerto Rico. Together we can be the best advocates not only for Puerto Ricans, but for our own communities so that the man-made disaster caused by our government’s neglectful response never happens again.

*The author is the Executive Director of Chicanos de South Bronx en Acción, a non for profit civic engagement group that works to advance the civil rights and economic well being of Mexican Americans and other Latinos in the South Bronx.*

# Don't Forget Social Media!

## Contacting Your Elected Officials on Social Media

**S**ocial media is an incredibly useful tool for drawing the attention of your Senators and Members of Congress. Just like us, they monitor their social media posts regularly to stay updated on what's happening around the world, and at home.

September 20, 2019 marks two years since Hurricane Maria's landfall in Puerto Rico. Help raise awareness about Puerto Rico's ongoing recovery needs by posting on social media and using the hashtags #2YearsAfterMaria & #BoricuasRemember. Together, we will unite our voices to make sure that the people of Puerto Rico are not forgotten!

Here are a few things to remember when interacting with your Member of Congress on social media:

- Make sure the account is verified: all major social media companies (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) verify official accounts by placing a blue checkmark next to the account names of public individuals. If you don't see a blue checkmark, the account might be fake!



- Use your real name/account. Members of Congress cannot be responsive to individuals whom they cannot identify as real people.
- If you are a constituent - say so! Make sure you include that you live in the Congressional District or State of your Member of Congress.

- Use the hashtag #TakeAction4PR. We want Congress to know that we are part of a broader movement to hold them accountable for their actions on Puerto Rico. A hashtag helps to identify us as part of the same team.

### Sample Social Media Posts

Here are a few examples of language that you can use in your social media posts.

### Promotional Messages

Tweets to Promote Take Action For Puerto Rico! Campaign:

- [NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION] is part of the #TakeAction4PR campaign, reminding Congress about the work still needed for Puerto Rico's recovery and rebuild, #2YearsAfterMaria #PuertoRico. Find out how you can join our efforts and help: [www.takeaction4pr.org](http://www.takeaction4pr.org)
- It's been #2YearsAfterMaria, and rebuilding #PuertoRico is still a priority. We are part of #TakeAction4PR day of action in Congress, demanding better democratization and transparency of the recovery process of the island. Find out more here: [www.takeaction4pr.org](http://www.takeaction4pr.org)
- There is still so much to be done for Puerto Rico! We are proud to support and join efforts with the Hispanic Federation and the #TakeAction4PR partners, demanding Congress to help rebuild the island and recuperate #2YearsAfterMaria. #NoMoreExcuses #justrecovery

### Tweets to Members of Congress:

- Rep. X(insert your Member of Congress' Twitter handle here), tell @realdonaldtrump @HUDgov to stop thwarting the will of Congress and release critical disaster funding from Puerto Rico already approved Congress approved. #Justice4PR #2YearsAfterMaria #BoricuasRemember #PRseRespeta
- Sen. X(insert your Senator' Twitter handle here), tell @realdonaldtrump not to take away hundreds of millions from the National Guard of #PuertoRico and several states to pay for an unnecessary, expensive & offensive wall that Mexico was supposed to pay for. #2YearsAfterMaria #BoricuasRemember #PRseRespeta

## Tweets for Policy Positions/Asks

- Two years after Hurricane Maria, the Trump Administration has interfered and obstructed Congress to prevent approved recovery funds from reaching Puerto Rico. THIS MUST STOP! Puerto Rico deserves a #justrecovery <http://takeaction4pr.org/> #TakeAction4PR #MarialsStillHere
- \$125B is needed to rebuild #PuertoRico. To date, Congress has allocated less than \$30B. This is shameful! Join the campaign to take action for Puerto Rico! Text TakeAction4PR to 21333. #TakeAction4PR #MarialsStillHere [takeaction4pr.org](http://takeaction4pr.org)
- Trump said it was \$92B. Congress approved \$49.4B. But the actual aid received in PuertoRico is less than \$21B. #2YearsAfterMaria, PR still needs action to rebuild, not political games or lies! #TakeAction4PR #MarialsStillHere
- Did you know? 2-yrns after Hurricane Maria, the Fed government and the Trump Admin. have intentionally interfered and obstructed Congress, preventing PR to get all approved recovery funds. We demand an immediate stop! PuertoRicans are Americans too. #MarialsStillHere #TakeAction4PR
- We just witnessed it with #Bahamas: experts predict future extreme weather events will be even WORSE due to climate change. #PuertoRico is still in need of assistance to recover, #2YearsAfterMaria #MarialsStillHere #TakeAction4PR
- Climate change is making extreme weather events more severe and deadly. @EPA must protect the health & safety of all American families incl. vulnerable communities & communities of color hit first and worst by the impacts of climate change. #TakeAction4PR [takeaction4pr.org](http://takeaction4pr.org)
- Hurricane Maria was the worst natural disaster in the island's history, resulting in the longest blackout in American history, and killing at least 3,000 people. #TwoYearsAfterMaria we need to #TakeAction4PR to ensure much-needed resources for recovery reach the island.
- Congress can begin the decolonization process by removing colonial barriers to economic development and providing full parity in federal programs. These actions include allowing PR to restructure/discharge its own debt, and eliminating disparities in the tax code. #TakeAction4PR #MariaisstillHere
- The debt must be audited. The future of #PuertoRico must not be compromised by repaying debt that was illegally or unconstitutionally obligated. Why should the most-vulnerable have to pay for the illegal activities of a few? #TakeAction4PR #AuditoriaYA
- Three quick ways in which Congress can help the people of Puerto Rico right now:
  - 1) Demand and provide resources for an independent audit of Puerto Rico's debt.
  - 2) Provide equal Medicare/Medicaid funding to PR
  - 2) Extend CTC and EITC to residents of the island
- Puerto Rico needs a #MarshallPlan that not only invests the tens of billions of dollars needed for the island to get back on its feet, but that also provides a blueprint of how to get there. #ShowUsYourPRPolicy
- Our message is simple: Congress should help rebuild the island, as they have done for Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and other devastated areas. All U.S. citizens should be treated equally, no matter where they live. #TakeAction4PR #TwoYearsAfterMaria <https://to.pbs.org/2jkLcw0>
- Estimates indicate that Puerto Rico needs about \$139 billion in order to repair all the damage caused by Maria. Two years later the Trump continues to mislead the public - the administration has sent less \$14 billion. We need action now. <https://nbcnews.to/2JNjKUs>
- #RadicalTransparency measures are a democratic check on both local and federal actors, and should require that contracts not be awarded to companies that have been convicted or fined for breaking any labor, environmental, or other federal or local laws. <https://bit.ly/2mjQ0qj>
- Recovery and rebuilding should not be an excuse for exploitation or for waiving any civil, human, or environmental rights in the name of speed – or greed. #TakeAction4PR #PeopleBeforeGreed
- We all know that @realDonaldTrump is a liar, but when those lies affect the recovery efforts of the most vulnerable in Puerto Rico, we have to stand up and #TakeAction4PR. #TwoYearsAfterMaria this continues to be Trump's Katrina.

## Facebook/Instagram: Posts to promote the Take Action For Puerto Rico Campaign

- Hurricane Maria was the worst natural disaster in the island's history and killed at least 3,000 people. It altered the lives of the 3.2 million who lived in Puerto Rico, and the millions more in states who care about them. Two years later, there is still much work to be done. We're working with grassroots advocates, faith-based leaders, labor unions, community-based organizations, public officials, and educators to encourage and elevate discussion about how we can help Puerto Rico rebuild. TextTakeAction4PR to 21333 to reach

your Members of Congress and tell them to Take Action for Puerto Rico!

- Two years after Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico still struggles to recuperate from the devastation. It has also been caught up in between bad federal and local politics. We joined #TakeAction4PR to demand more congressional involvement, to help the island get the necessary funds to rebuild. Find out how you can join us too: [www.takeaction4pr.org](http://www.takeaction4pr.org)

**Policy Positions/Asks Posts**

- Did you know? Two years after Hurricane Maria, the federal government and the Trump Administration have been intentionally interfering and obstructing Congress to prevent that the approved recovery funds to reach Puerto Rico. We demand an immediate stop! Call and tell your Member of Congress that Puerto Ricans are Americans too. Help us press for a #justrecovery. #TakeAction4PR <http://takeaction4pr.org/call-your-members-of-congress/> #MarialsStillHere
- It's been two years since Hurricane Maria and Puerto Rico is still sorely in need of assistance to rebuild. Out of the \$42.7B disaster relief approved by Congress, Puerto Rico has only received \$14B. This is shameful! #TakeAction4PR [www.takeaction4pr.org](http://www.takeaction4pr.org)
- Trump said it was \$92B. Congress approved \$49.4B. But the actual aid received in Puerto Rico is less than \$21B. Join us demanding your Member of Congress that two years after Maria, PR still needs action, not political games or lies! A just recovery should be in the hands of the people of Puerto Rico, led by the people and for the people. #TakeAction4PR. #MarialsStillHere <http://takeaction4pr.org/call-your-members-of-congress/>
- Did you know? The lack of transparency and meaningful public participation has greatly hindered the recovery of Puerto Rico for the past two years. We demand that Puerto Ricans have access to the information in Spanish and the freedom to participate in making sure each federal dollar will get to the communities it was intended for. #TakeAction4PR #MarialsStillHere
- We demand that U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico get the same kind of treatment as citizens who live on the mainland and also endured natural disasters. Our message: Congress should allocate sufficient funds to help rebuild the island, and the Trump Administration must release those funds, as they have already done and are doing for Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and other devastated areas. Join the campaign to rebuild Puerto Rico at [takeaction4pr.org](http://takeaction4pr.org) and get valuable resources for how you can help! #TakeAction4PR #MarialsStillHere

- Hey (tag your favorite presidential candidate)! As a candidate for President of the United States you should let the Puerto Rican community know how you plan to help Puerto Rico recover and rebuild from Hurricane Maria. #TwoYearsAfterMaria made landfall, and the federal government is still dragging its feet to help the people on the island. What do you plan to do? #TakeAction4PR #ShowUsYourPRPolicy #MarialsStillHere
- Three quick ways in which Congress can help the people of Puerto Rico right now:

- 1) Require and pay for an independent audit of Puerto Rico's debt.
  - 2) Extend CTC and EITC to residents of the island as a tool to reduce poverty levels on the island.
  - 3) Provide equal Medicare/Medicaid funding to PR and ensure that people have access to affordable care.
- #TakeAction4PR #MarialsStillHere

**Main campaign hashtags:**

#TakeAction4PR #MarialsStillHere #TwoYearsAfterMaria

**Secondary campaign hashtags:**

#BoricuasRemember #TrumpsKatrina #Power4PuertoRico #ShowUsYourPRPolicy

# Puerto Rico Fast Facts!

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Founded in 1521, San Juan Puerto Rico is the oldest city under U.S. jurisdiction. (Source: [Welcome.topuertorico.org](http://Welcome.topuertorico.org))
  - Puerto Rico is home to El Yunque, the only tropical rainforest that is part of the U.S. Forest Service. (Source: [US Department of Agriculture](http://US Department of Agriculture))
  - Puerto Rico is about the size of the state of Connecticut, and has 272 miles of beautiful coastline, and [300 beaches](#). (Source: [USA Today](http://USA Today))
  - [In 2019, the New York Times named Puerto Rico the No. 1 Place to Visit](#). Puerto Rico's beaches have been perennially featured as some of the best in the [Caribbean](#), the United States, and the [world](#). Here's a [video](#) showing some of the things you can discover in Puerto Rico.
- “ The median income in Puerto Rico is \$19,775. That is less than half of the median income in the poorest U.S. state, Mississippi, which is \$42,009. ”**
- Puerto Ricans often use the word “boricua” [Bo-REE-ku-wah] as a self-description. The name comes from the indigenous Taíno word Boriken, which was the native population's name for the island. (Source: [Welcome.toPuertoRico.org](http://Welcome.toPuertoRico.org))
  - The Puerto Rico Trench is the deepest submarine depression in the North Atlantic Ocean. It is about 1,090 miles (1,750 km) long and 60 miles (100 km) wide. The deepest point in the Atlantic Ocean, the “[Milwaukee Depth](#),” lies within the Puerto Rico Trench. (Source: [National Geographic](http://National Geographic))
  - Puerto Rico has competed individually in the Olympics since 1948, and has won nine medals including a gold medal for tennis. (Source: [International Olympic Committee](http://International Olympic Committee))
  - The first Hispanic Supreme Court Justice, Sonia Sotomayor, and the first Hispanic U.S. Surgeon General, Antonia Coello Novello, are both Puerto Rican. (Sources: [Washington Post](http://Washington Post), [Encyclopaedia Britanica](http://Encyclopaedia Britanica))
  - Puerto Ricans have served in the U.S. military since 1899, and have been soldiers in every major American military engagement since then. As of 2017, the Veterans Affairs Department listed the number of veterans living in Puerto Rico at 79,322. (Source: [US Veterans Affairs Dept.](http://US Veterans Affairs Dept.))
  - There have been at least 9 Members of Congress of Puerto Rican descent and 20 [Resident Commissioners](#) elected to Congress. Resident Commissioners are non-voting members of Congress. The first Puerto Rican elected to serve as a Member of Congress was Hernán Badillo, who represented New York from 1971 to 1977. (Source: [Library of Congress](http://Library of Congress))
  - One of Puerto Rico's most notable exports is its music, which is widely-acclaimed and played the world over. Salsa is the most recognized Puerto Rican musical genre.. However, Bomba and Plena (musical forms rooted in African and Taino sounds and traditions) are considered by Puerto Ricans to be the most popular form of folk music on the island. Today, Reggaeton (a musical genre influenced by hip hop and Caribbean music) might be arguably the most popular dance music coming out of Puerto Rico.
  - Acclaimed Puerto Rican performer Rita Moreno is the only Latina, and only one of four women out of a total of twelve artists, to be an EGOT winner after receiving all four major annual American entertainment awards: an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and a Tony. (Source: [Billboard](http://Billboard))
  - Ricky Martin, Benicio del Toro, Marc Anthony, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Daddy Yankee, Ozuna, Bad Bunny, and Jennifer López are among the group of celebrities that are household names in the US.
  - The island's system of government is called a Commonwealth. It is a Republican form of government (3 branches) with the highest elected office being the Governor who is elected to a four year term. (Source: [Welcome.toPuertoRico.org](http://Welcome.toPuertoRico.org))
  - Puerto Rico imports 85% of its food leading to higher prices and dependency on imports. (Source: [NBC](http://NBC))
  - Puerto Rico has a rich culinary scene influenced by a variety of cultures. Mofongo (fried green plantains with garlic and pork cracklings) is widely considered to be Puerto Rico's most popular dish -- a meal with strong roots in Western Africa, and Spanish and Taino ingredients. (Source: [Washington Post](http://Washington Post))

## Puerto Rico and the United States - History and Inequities

### DID YOU KNOW?

- [44.4%](#) of the Puerto Rican Population lives under the federal poverty line, which is almost four times higher than the U.S. national average of [11.8%](#). (Sources: [U.S. Census Bureau](#))
- Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens by birth. More than 3.2 million Puerto Ricans live on the island and almost twice as many, 5.3 million live on the U.S. mainland, making eligibility to vote in federal elections dependent on where a Puerto Rican happens to live. (Sources: [Newsweek](#), [Pew Research Center](#))
- As of July 2018, the median income in Puerto Rico is [\\$19,775](#). That is less than half of the median income in the poorest U.S. state, Mississippi, which is [\\$42,009](#). (Source: [U.S. Census Bureau](#))
- Puerto Rico has its own tax system and revenues go to the Commonwealth and its municipalities. But Puerto Ricans also pay U.S. payroll taxes (Social Security, Medicare, etc.) on any income source they receive from the mainland, but do not receive the same level of federal benefits received by those living on the mainland. (Source: [Vox](#))
- Puerto Ricans are not eligible for the Child Tax Credit unless they have at least 3 children. (Source: [Center for the New Economy](#))
- The federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), [one of the most effective anti-poverty policies in recent history](#), [does not apply](#) in Puerto Rico. (Source: [The Brookings Institution](#))
- Last year former Governor Rosselló signed into law a tax reform that included a [local EITC](#) that will provide families a credit ranging from [\\$300 to \\$2,000](#). However, experts agree that [expanding the federal EITC in Puerto Rico](#) would be greatly help to reduce poverty rates in the island.
- Puerto Rico receives far less help from the federal government for Medicaid costs than what the 50 states receive. The federal government pays 76.98% of the costs in Mississippi; in Puerto Rico, where the median income is far below Mississippi, it only pays 55%. ([Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation](#)).
- Some critics argue that since residents of Puerto Rico don't pay federal income taxes, that the island's poorest residents should therefore not receive the same benefits as other U.S. citizens receive under Medicaid. The reality is that [Puerto Ri-](#)

[cans do pay several forms of federal taxes](#) and the residents of the states who receive Medicaid also do not pay federal income taxes.

- Puerto Rico has not participated in the SNAP program since the 1980s - and therefore receives less funding than states for nutritional assistance - under the [Nutritional Assistance Program](#) (NAP or PAN in Spanish). After Hurricane Maria, and the hunger thousands faced as a result, Congress temporarily increased funding to cover the additional need. This funding lapsed for six months and was [temporarily extended](#) in the Summer of 2019 for the rest of the year. The [Equitable Nutrition Assistance for the Territories Act of 2019](#) would provide a permanent solution by restoring SNAP-level funding for Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories.
- Although Puerto Ricans pay the same amount of payroll taxes as residents of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, low-income seniors living in Puerto Rico are [not eligible for the subsidy for prescription drugs](#) that [Medicare provides low-income seniors on the mainland](#). (Source: [CMS.gov](#))

## Puerto Rico and the Aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Between 80% and 90% of houses were damaged by Hurricane Maria. (Source: [PBS](#))
- It took nearly two weeks for President Trump to visit the island. The five hours he spent there were marked by him [tossing paper towels](#), jump-shot style, into a crowd of residents as opposed to doing a substantive review of the damage or the needs of the island. In comparison, both [President Obama](#) and [President Bush](#) visited the areas affected by Hurricane Sandy and Hurricane Katrina just two days after they made land-fall. (Source: [TIME](#))
- A [devastating internal report by FEMA](#) featured in [The New York Times](#) underscores how unprepared the agency was for the hurricane response. For example, the report found that:
  - The agency's employees were not prepared to handle emergencies and needed thousands of workers more than those available.
  - FEMA lost track of most of the aid and of who needed it.
  - FEMA used a five-year-old earthquake and tsunami plan because they had not prepared for a hurricane.
  - FEMA warehouses were not stocked properly before the hurricane, and were not restocked after aid was

- given to U.S. Virgin Islands after Hurricane Irma.
- FEMA failed to fix logistical problems identified during emergency preparedness drills.
- It took days for the first supplies to arrive via ship and when the aid did arrive, the agency had not set up a distribution network.
- The satellite phones the agency sent for communications did not work properly.
- Here are the [disturbing numbers](#), one month after Hurricane Maria, when about 1 million people still lacked access to running water.
- One month after Hurricane Maria, less than 20% of the electrical grid was restored, leaving more than 3 million people without power. 44% of Puerto Ricans still had no access to clean drinking water. (Source: [CNN](#))
- One month after the Hurricane Maria, about 1 million people still lacked access to running water. (Source: [TIME](#))
- It took almost a year from the date of Hurricane Maria making landfall for the Puerto Rican government to investigate and release an updated number of fatalities. The original, “official” death count was 17. While there may never be a final number of the deaths caused by Hurricane Maria, officials have finally raised the count to nearly 3,000 people who perished as a result of Hurricane Maria. However, other studies estimate that number could be higher than 4,500. (Sources: [CNN](#), [CNN](#))
- In year 2017 alone, 283 schools [were ordered closed](#) in Puerto Rico, a decision that [displaced about 60,000 students](#). This was on top of an earlier round of closures in the previous term, having a quarter of the island’s schools shutting down.
- The blackout Puerto Rico experienced after Hurricane Maria is the longest blackout in U.S. history. (Source: [Vox](#))
- Puerto Rico is currently in the midst of another migratory wave, with 632,000 leaving the island since 2004, and more than 160,000 leaving in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. (Sources: [Pew Research Center](#), [Center for Puerto Rican Studies](#))
- The percentage of houses that have informal land titles is estimated to be more than 50% of all housing, which are recognized in Puerto Rico civil law or Napoleonic law system similar to Louisiana’s legal system. (Source: [Puerto Rico Builders Association](#), [marketplace.org](#))
- FEMA denied or did not answer more than 79% of the 335,748 aid applications submitted in Puerto Rico. (Source: [NBC](#))
- According to the National Hurricane Center, Hurricane Maria was the third costliest hurricane to hit the United States. The Center estimated \$90 billion in damages at the time. (Source: [National Hurricane Center](#))
- Two years after Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated Puerto Rico, there are still more than 30,000 homes with plastic blue tarps over their heads instead of roofs, due to delays by FEMA. (Source: [El Nuevo Día](#) newspaper)

### The Summer of 2019

- In the Summer of 2019, Puerto Ricans united like never before to demand the resignation of the island’s Governor.
- After 2 weeks of sustained protests, where close to 1 million people marched, Gov. Ricardo Rosselló announced his resignation, following the mass protests that were triggered by a [leaked chat](#) where offensive and potential illegal behavior was the last straw for most Puerto Ricans. (Sources: NBC News, [Motherjones](#))
- Top [FEMA officials were indicted](#) by the FBI in a major federal corruption investigation involving bribery resulting in awarding \$1.8 billion in FEMA money to repair Puerto Rico’s electrical grid.
- Our federal government has spent roughly \$4.5 billion on contractors from the mainland, while it has only spent \$500 million on contractors in Puerto Rico. (Source: [Center for the New Economy](#).)

## SAMPLE PROCLAMATION

# PROCLAMATION REGARDING PUERTO RICO TWO YEARS YEAR AFTER HURRICANE MARIA

**Whereas,** Puerto Rico is a Commonwealth associated with the United States and Puerto Ricans are natural born U.S. citizens,

**Whereas,** on September 6, 2017, Hurricane Irma landed on Puerto Rico and caused more than \$1 billion in damages,

**Whereas,** on September 20, 2017, a Category 5 storm, Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico destroying the island from coast to coast and completely destroying the operational capacities of its energy grid, leaving the entire island blacked out for months, entire communities were cut off from telecommunications, clean water, life-saving medical care, medicine, and other basic services,

**Whereas,** as a result of Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico experienced the longest blackout in the history of the United States and the 2nd longest blackout ever,

**Whereas,** an independent investigation revealed that the death toll caused by Hurricane Maria was different from the official account and was found to be closer to 3,000 souls lost making Maria the deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history,

**Whereas,** new estimates for rebuilding Puerto Rico begin at \$127 billion,

**Whereas,** the Government of Puerto Rico's hurricane damage assessment report calculates the damages caused by the storm to be more than \$135 billion,

**Whereas,** Hurricane Maria aggravated the outflow of Puerto Ricans moving to the 50 states, causing the exodus of more than 125,000 Puerto Ricans in the months after the storm,

**Whereas,** Puerto Rico's population decreased by more than 400,000 in the previous 10 years due to the acute fiscal and economic crisis suffered by the island,

**Whereas,** in 2018, Congress passed a tax reform law that imposed additional taxes on US companies operating in Puerto Rico, further eroding Puerto Rico's ability to attract investment and create jobs, and potentially worsening the economic crisis,

**Whereas,** well into 2019, close to two years after the deadliest natural disaster in modern US history, the federal government purposely withheld funding from disaster victims in Puerto Rico for more than a year and a half after Congress appropriated the funding,

**Whereas,** the people of Puerto Rico peacefully rose up and forced their Governor to resign following weeks of protests condemning public corruption, hate speech and other scandals. The Summer of 2019, or #RickyRenuncia, movement were an example to the world of how people power can lead to democratic change,

**Whereas,** Puerto Rico continues to struggle to rebuild two years after the storm and the 3.2 million U.S. citizens living there still needs federal recovery and reconstruction assistance to, among many other needs, rebuild homes for the more than 30,000 families still living under plastic blue tarps two years after Hurricane Maria.

Now, therefore, I (NAME), (TITLE) TOWN of \_\_\_\_\_

Do hereby proclaim as September 20, 2019 and each and every September 20th, shall be known as **We Are Puerto Rico Day** and the day shall serve as a 24-hour observance and call for our federal government to provide Puerto Rico the appropriate assistance and disburse resources and tools it needs to rebuild its infrastructure, economy and other key sectors, and it shall mark a day in which part of the conversation recalls the importance of Puerto Rico in our country's history.

# Take Action for Puerto Rico!

## ADDITIONAL READING

### Life After Maria

[5 Puerto Rican Fashion Designers On Life After Hurricane María](#) (Refinery 29, June 20, 2018)

[In Puerto Rico, A Family's Fight To Rebuild Their Lives After Hurricane María](#) (Refinery 29, July 19, 2018)

[My Maria story: six Puerto Ricans on surviving after the hurricane](#) (The Guardian, August 9, 2018)

[Puerto Rico Spent 11 Months Turning the Power Back On. They Finally Got to Her.](#) (The New York Times, August 14, 2018)

### The Local Response

[Slow Recovery in Puerto Rico](#) (Smithsonian Magazine)

### The Federal Response

[Perceptions in America: Puerto Rico & Disaster Relief Response](#) (Ipsos, October 10, 2017)

[GAO: Limited Puerto Rico data hinders economic analysis](#) (Caribbean Business, June 29, 2018)

[Dems push FEMA on housing help for displaced Puerto Ricans](#) (The Hill, August 2, 2018)

[FEMA admits shortcomings in 2017 hurricane response in Puerto Rico](#) (USA Today, July 12, 2018)

### The Economy

[FEMA Begins Scaling Back Financial Assistance In Puerto Rico](#) (NPR, August 17, 2018)

[Puerto Rico reports lowest unemployment in 50 years](#) (The Hill, August 17, 2018)

[P.R. economists recommend 5 measures at the federal level to spur growth](#) (News is My Business, July 27, 2018)

[The perfect storm: building a crypto-utopia in Puerto Rico](#) (The Guardian, August 9, 2018)

### Energy and the Environment

[Six Months After Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico's Environmental Restoration Accelerates Thanks to Volunteers, Conservation Groups](#) (Associated Press, via Weather.com, March 9, 2018)

[Planning for the Unimaginable: Puerto Rico and Strategies for Climate-Change Adaptation](#) (Metropolitics, May 1, 2018).

[What Happened in the Dark: Puerto Rico's Year of Fighting for Power](#) (Wired, August 23, 2018)

[Puerto Rico power company plan chock-full of fossil fuels](#) (Caribbean Business, August 23, 2018)

### Health and Education

[If A School Becomes A Shelter In Puerto Rico, Where Do Students Learn?](#) (NPR, December 11, 2017)

[How is health care in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria? No one knows.](#) (Washington Post, April 18, 2018)

[Listless And Lonely In Puerto Rico, Some Older Storm Survivors Consider Suicide](#) (All Things Considered, NPR, May 7, 2018)

[Harvard study estimates thousands died in Puerto Rico due to Hurricane Maria](#) (Washington Post, May 29, 2018)

[Primary healthcare centers in Puerto Rico prepare for next emergency](#) (Caribbean Business, May 31, 2018)

[What Hurricane Maria's Death Toll Reveals about Health Care in Puerto Rico](#) (Harvard Business Review, June 7, 2018)

### Puerto Rico's Debt, PROMESA, and The Fiscal Oversight Board (FOMB)

[PR's Fiscal Control Board: Parallel government full of lawyers, consultants](#) (News is My Business, August 2, 2018)

[Puerto Rico power rates could impact viability of water utility's fiscal plan](#) (Caribbean Business, August 2, 2018)

[PREPA's Debt 2.0 Restructuring](#) (Center for a New Economy, August 16, 2018)

[Puerto Rico FOMB - Final Investigative Report on Debt](#) (Kobre & Kim, August 20, 2018)

[Commentary: Who really owes Puerto Rico's bondholders—and how much?](#) (The Bond Buyer, August 23, 2018)

### The Diaspora: Puerto Ricans on the U.S. Mainland

[How Puerto Ricans fit into an increasingly anti-immigrant U.S.](#) (The Washington Post, January 19, 2018)

[Survey of Puerto Ricans in Florida finds many plan to stay, language barrier a top challenge](#) (Orlando Sentinel, July 6, 2018)

[Florida lawsuit seeks Spanish translation of ballots, alleges voting rights violations affecting Puerto Ricans](#) (The Washington Post, August 17, 2018)

['Exodus' from Puerto Rico: A visual guide](#) (CNN.com, February 21, 2018)

[Where Puerto Rico's Residents Migrated Since Maria - CityLab](#) (CityLab, May 11, 2018)

### Miscellaneous

[Puerto Rico population in 2050: 2 million, fiscal board demographer says](#) (Caribbean Business, August 20, 2018)

# List of Groups with Websites for Donation

## AGRICULTURE

Centro Microempresas y Tecnologías Agrícolas Sustentables (Yauco) <https://www.cmtasyauco.com/>

El Departamento de La Comida (multiple municipalities) <https://www.facebook.com/departamentodelacomida/>  
<https://www.fondoderesilienciapuertorico.org/donate/>

Siembra Tres Vidas  
<https://www.siembratresvidas.com/>

## HOUSING

Proyecto Enlace (San Juan)  
<http://cano3punto7.org/nuevo/index.html>  
<https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/from-tarps-to-roofs-hurricane-maria-puerto-rico/>

Plenitud PR (Las Marias)  
<http://plenitudpreng.weebly.com/>  
<http://plenitudpreng.weebly.com/giving.html>

Puerto Rico Neighborhood Housing Services (San Juan) <https://www.facebook.com/puertoriconhs/>

La Maraña (Comerio, Carolina, and Humacao)  
<http://www.lamarana.org/>  
<http://www.lamarana.org/la-mara%C3%B1a--dona.html>

SOL es V.I.D.A. (Toa Baja)  
<http://solesvida.org/>  
<http://solesvida.org/colabora/>

Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico (Island-Wide)  
<https://ayudalegalpr.org/ayudaparadesastres>

Fundacion Fondo para Acceso a la Justicia (Island Wide)  
<https://fundacionfondoaccesoalajusticia.org/>  
<https://fundacionfondoaccesoalajusticia.org/fondo-legal-de-emergencia-huracan-maria/>

Red de Albergues, Instituciones y Centros para Menores  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Red-De-Albergues-Instituciones-y-Centros-para-Menores-De-Puerto-Rico/623554841184380>

## Jobs and Economic Development

Accion Social De Puerto Rico, Inc. (ASPRI), (Island Wide)  
<https://www.facebook.com/praccion/>

Programa de Educación Comunal de Entrega y Servicio - PECES, Inc. (Humacao) <https://www.pecesinc.org/>  
<https://www.pecesinc.org/ayuda>

Instituto de Ciencias para la Conservación de Puerto Rico – InCiCo (Island-wide)  
<https://www.facebook.com/incicopuertorico/>

Incubadora Microempresas Bieke, Inc (Vieques)  
<https://www.facebook.com/IncubadoraBieke/>  
donate via fb – they are updating the link

Proyecto Matria (Orocovis)  
<https://www.proyectomatria.org/>  
<https://www.proyectomatria.org/donaciones>

Connecting Paths (Morovis and Adjuntas) <http://www.connectingpaths.org/espanol/1quienes/origenes.html>  
<http://www.connectingpaths.org/espanol/4conecta/apoya.html>

Grupo Guayacan (Island-wide)  
<https://guayacan.org/>  
<https://guayacan.org/give/>

Centros Sor Isolina Ferre (San Juan and Ponce)  
<http://www.csifpr.org/>  
<http://www.csifpr.org/donaciones/>

Asociación Recreativa y Educativa Comunal del Barrio Mariana – ARECMA/Proyecto Apoyo Mutuo Mariana (Humacao)  
<http://arecma.wixsite.com/arecma>  
[www.apoyomutuomariana.com/contribute/](http://www.apoyomutuomariana.com/contribute/)

## EDUCATION

Aspira of Puerto Rico (Loiza and Carolina)  
<http://www.aspirapr.org/>  
<http://www.aspirapr.org/ayudnos/donar/>

Crearte (Yabucoa and San Juan)  
<http://createpr.weebly.com/iquestquieacutenes-somos.html>

## ADDITIONAL READING

Instituto Nueva Escuela (Island Wide)  
<http://en-inepr.weebly.com/>  
<http://en-inepr.weebly.com/donate.html>

Salon Literario Libroamerica  
<http://salonliterariolibroamerica.com/>

Boys and Girls Club of Puerto Rico (Island-Wide)  
<http://bgcpr.org/>  
<http://bgcpr.org/invierte/>

### ART

Beta Local (San Juan)  
<http://betalocal.org/>

Dulce Santurce (San Juan)  
<http://www.dulcesanturce.com/>

Y No Habia Luz  
<http://ynohabialuz.com/>

Agua, Sol y Sereno  
<https://www.facebook.com/Agua-Sol-y-Sereno-409224669182689/>

Fundación Música y Pais  
<https://www.musicaypais.org/>

Andanza  
<http://www.andanzapr.com/>

Museo de Arte Contemporáneo  
<http://mac-pr.org/>

### HEALTH

Centro MAM, Carolina  
<http://mujeresayudandomadres.com/>

Taller Salud (Loiza)  
<https://www.tallersalud.com/>

Renewable Energy & Communications  
Resilient Power PR (Multiple Municipalities)  
<https://resilientpowerpr.org/>  
<https://resilientpowerpr.org/donate/>

Coastal Marine Resource Center – Solar Libre (Island wide)  
<http://coastalmarine.org/>  
<http://coastalmarine.org/donate/>

Casa Pueblo (Adjuntas)  
<http://casapueblo.org/>  
<http://casapueblo.org/index.php/calendario/>

Solar Saves Lives Coalition (Island-wide)  
<https://www.thesolarfoundation.org/solar-saves-lives/>  
<https://www.thesolarfoundation.org/donate/>

### ENVIRONMENT

Conservación ConCiencia (Island Wide)  
<https://www.conservacionconciencia.org/>  
<https://www.conservacionconciencia.org/donate>

Para La Naturaleza (Multiple Municipalities)  
<http://www.paralanaturaleza.org/en/>  
<https://reservaciones.paralanaturaleza.org/donate.jsf?lang=en>

Protectores de Cuencas (Island Wide)  
<https://www.protectoresdecuencas.org/>

Sociedad Ambiente Marino (Culebra)  
<http://sampr.org/en/>

Caras con Causa (Cataño and Guaynabo)  
<http://www.caraspr.org/>  
<http://www.caraspr.org/donate/>

Foundation for a Better Puerto Rico (Culebra)  
<https://betterpuertorico.org/>  
<https://www.paypal.com/donate/?token=jN1AxPrUvVYB-1mrCJINgX1X3roRq8cY3WZO4B6-dLXDo9FGabYqqZvFm-36jkVszMhqlzx0&country.x=US&locale.x=US>

Fideicomiso de Conservación e Historia de Vieques (Vieques)  
<http://www.vcht.org/>  
<http://www.vcht.org/donate>



**COALITION PARTNERS\***

100 Hispanic Women  
 Abrazo Boricua Coalition  
 Afro Latin Jazz Alliance  
 Aid for AIDS  
 Alianza Americas  
 American Federation Teachers  
 American GI Forum  
 Americas for Conversation + Arts  
 Arab Community Center for Economic & Social Services  
 ARTE  
 Asian American Federation  
 Asian American Business Development Center  
 Asian Americans Advancing Justice/Asian Law Caucus  
 ASPIRA National  
 ASPIRA of New York, Inc.  
 Bienestar Human Services  
 Boundless Theatre Company  
 Bridgeport Caribe Youth League  
 Calpulli Mexican Dance Company  
 Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network  
 Casita Maria Center for Arts and Education  
 Catholic Network. US  
 Center for Latino Progress CPRF  
 Center for Puerto Rican Studies  
 Centro Civico de Amsterdam  
 Chemical Abuse Services Agency, Inc.  
 Churches United for Fair Housing  
 Circulo de la Hispanidad  
 Clarita's House Outreach Ministry, Inc.  
 Coalicion de Lideres Latinos  
 Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles  
 Consumer Credit Counseling Service/Florida

Consumer  
 Committee for Hispanic Children and Families  
 Community Association of Progressive Dominicans  
 Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute  
 COPAY, Inc.  
 District Council 37  
 Dominican Women's Development Center  
 Dominicanos USA  
 Dominico-American Society of Queens  
 EarthJustice  
 El Puente  
 Exodus Transitional Community, Inc.  
 Faith in Florida  
 Farmworker Justice  
 Fifth Avenue Committee  
 Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials  
 Haitian Women of Miami (FAMN, Inc.)  
 Hispanic Alliance of Southeastern Connecticut  
 Hispanic Center of Greater Danbury  
 Hispanic Counseling Center  
 Hispanic Federation  
 Hispanic Health Council  
 Hispanic Health Initiatives, Inc.  
 Hispanics in Philanthropy  
 Hispanos Unidos de Buffalo  
 I Challenge Myself  
 Ibero-American Action League  
 Iniciativa Accion Puertorriqueña  
 Institute for Puerto Rican/Hispanic Elderly  
 Justice Shall be For All  
 La Casa de Don Pedro  
 Labor Council for Latin American Advancement  
 Latino Commission on AIDS  
 Latino Community Foundation  
 Latino Community Fund Georgia  
 Latino Community Fund Washington State  
 Latino Community Services, Inc.  
 LatinoJustice PRLDEF  
 Latino U College Access  
 Loisaida, Inc.  
 Make the Road New York  
 Mercy Center  
 Mi Familia Vota  
 Ministerio En Jehová Serán Provistos  
 Mision Boricua  
 Morris County Organization for Hispanic Affairs

National Day Laborer Organizing Network  
 National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators  
 National Hispanic Medical Association  
 National Immigration Law Center  
 National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health  
 National Latina/o Psychological Association  
 National Low Income Housing Coalition  
 National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture  
 National Puerto Rican Agenda  
 National Puerto Rico Day Parade  
 New Haven for Puerto Rico  
 New York Council on Adoptable Children  
 New York Urban League  
 Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance  
 Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights  
 Operation Exodus Inner City  
 Organize Florida  
 Oxfam America  
 People's Theatre Project  
 Pregones Theater PRTT  
 Presente.org  
 Puerto Rico Action Initiative  
 R.A.I.N. Total Care, Inc.  
 Refugees International  
 Repertorio Español  
 San Juan Center Inc.  
 Ser Familia, Inc.  
 Southside United HDFC – Los Sures  
 Spanish Community of Wallingford  
 Spanish Speaking Elderly Council  
 St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction  
 St. Simon of Stock and St. Joseph Church  
 Tantai Teatro  
 Teatro Circulo  
 Thalia Spanish Theatre Inc.  
 Transdiaspora Network  
 Union of Concerned Scientists  
 Unites States Hispanic Leadership Institute  
 United We Dream  
 Violence Intervention Program  
 Vision Urbana, Inc.  
 VOCES Latinas  
 Zone 126



[www.takeaction4pr.org](http://www.takeaction4pr.org)  
[info@takeaction4pr.org](mailto:info@takeaction4pr.org)