



Congressman Pedro R. Pierluisi
Statement As Prepared For Delivery in Opposition to Flake Amendment #35
H.R. 5850 - Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Act, 2011
July 29, 2010

Thank you, Mr./Madame Chairman:

I rise in strong opposition to this amendment. I requested \$150,000 to purchase equipment for a recreational park for low-income children in Yauco, Puerto Rico, a city in the southwestern part of the Island. The park will be constructed so that it is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. This funding will supplement funding already provided for the project by the city of Yauco. This is one of the smallest earmarks in the T-HUD bill. And it is unquestionably an appropriate and valuable use of federal funds.

There is currently no recreational park for children in Yauco, which is home to approximately 50,000 residents, has a poverty rate of 56%, and has an unemployment rate of 17.7%. Furthermore, although there are over 75,000 disabled children in Puerto Rico, I am advised that there is not a single recreational park in the entire southwestern region of Puerto Rico that is ADA-compliant and thus meaningfully accessible to children with disabilities.

Earlier this week, this House proudly commemorated the 20th anniversary of the ADA's passage. What better way is there to promote the goals of this landmark federal law than to provide a reasonable amount of funding to help equip a recreational park that children with disabilities can enjoy side-by-side with their able-bodied friends? The Department of Housing and Urban Development states that a core part of its mission is to "build inclusive and sustainable communities free from discrimination." And HUD's EDI program regularly funds the acquisition of equipment for public facilities like the recreational park in Yauco.

In closing, I would gently remind my friend from Arizona that a state with Puerto Rico's population would benefit from congressionally-directed spending requests from six representatives and two senators. However, because Puerto Rico is a territory, I alone am responsible for protecting the interests of four million American citizens.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment. And I yield back the balance of my time.