



Hon. Pedro R. Pierluisi
**Statement on H.R. 3940, “To Authorize the Secretary of Interior to Extend Grants and
Other Assistance to Facilitate a Political Status Public Education Program for the People of
Guam”**
Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans, and Wildlife
Thursday, November 5, 2009

Thank you, Chairwoman Bordallo and Ranking Member Brown.

Chairwoman Bordallo, I want to commend you for introducing H.R. 3940. I am an original co-sponsor and strong supporter of the bill. As you have explained, this legislation would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to extend assistance to the Government of Guam to facilitate a public education program on the territory’s political status options.

I agree completely with the statement made by Director Pula in his written testimony that: “When the political status of a territory is under consideration, education of the public regarding the options available to the people is of utmost importance. Only an educated populace can make informed decisions about its future.” Confusion about the options has delayed resolution of the status issue in the territory that I represent, Madame Chairwoman, as well as the one that you represent.

As the members of this Subcommittee are well aware, the full Committee recently approved H.R. 2499, the Puerto Rico Democracy Act, which I introduced in May with your support, Madame Chairwoman, and with the support of other members of this Subcommittee.

In its report on H.R. 2499, in which it recommended that the bill be approved by the full House, the Committee stated as follows: “Lack of clear understanding in Puerto Rico regarding its viable, non-territorial status options is a chief reason for this legislation. A federal law would clarify the viable status options and thereby ensure that the self-determination process is well-informed and productive.” What my bill would really do, above all, is to clarify the possible options in order to enable educated choices regarding Puerto Rico’s political status.

The American citizens of Guam, like the American citizens of Puerto Rico, deserve to know what their real options are. This assistance authorized under this bill would educate—and thus empower—the people of Guam.

I would note that we have a terrific new Assistant Secretary of Interior for Insular Areas, Tony Babauta, whose office would presumably provide the assistance and help guide the education process. Assistant Secretary Babauta knows the issue well from his service on the staff of this Committee.

Thank you again, Chairwoman Bordallo. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.