

sentiments that have been expressed today, including those from my friend and colleague from Florida, which are that, should Puerto Rico decide to seek independence, as an individual Member of Congress, I will support that. Should they decide to seek status as an associated republic, I will support that, and should they choose to join us as a State, I will support that.

This recent health care debate, I think, helped to show the people of Puerto Rico some of the advantages that might be attained were they a State. Their Resident Commissioner, PEDRO PIERLUISI, did an excellent job in trying to advocate for the interests of Puerto Rico in this health care debate, but he was but one vote. The people of Puerto Rico, counted and apportioned under a census, should have six Members of Congress, probably Members on both sides of the aisle, advocating for their interests alongside Members of Congress, representing other parts of our country. The current territorial status of Puerto Rico would end under any of the three options. No options would be subject to the territorial clause of the U.S. Constitution. As my colleague from New York has mentioned, this is a topic that is discussed constantly around dinner tables in Puerto Rico.

As a Member of Congress from Colorado, I respect the voice of the Puerto Rican people and of the Resident Commissioner, PEDRO PIERLUISI, who has been elected with this as part of his platform.

Given the current hyperpartisan environment under which Congress works, it is very good to see a bill with such strong bipartisan support. It is important to point out that this bill has over 180 cosponsors and that it was voted out of committee with a strong bipartisan majority. In addition, the highest of Puerto Rico's elected officials from both parties, including its Representative to Congress and Governor Luis Fortuño, along with a sizable majority of both chambers of its legislature, also support this bill. The reason is they understand that this bill upholds the most basic democratic tradition on which our country was founded.

Today, we can offer millions of people the right to self-determination. For too long, we have denied our fellow citizens this right, and we are now faced with an opportunity to fix this grievous injustice and to give the people of Puerto Rico the ability to self-determine. Therefore, I urge my colleagues to uphold this country's commitment to democracy and to vote for the underlying rule, which is a fair rule, and the legislation.

I urge a "yes" vote on the previous question and on the rule.

The material previously referred to by Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida is as follows:

AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 1305 OFFERED BY MR.
LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART OF FLORIDA

Strike all after the resolved clause and insert:

That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2499) to provide for a federally sanctioned self-determination process for the people of Puerto Rico. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour and 30 minutes, with one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Natural Resources and 30 minutes controlled by Representative Velazquez of New York or her designee. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Natural Resources now printed in the bill. Each section of the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. During consideration of the bill for amendment, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommend with or without instructions.

(The information contained herein was provided by Democratic Minority on multiple occasions throughout the 109th Congress.)

THE VOTE ON THE PREVIOUS QUESTION: WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

This vote, the vote on whether to order the previous question on a special rule, is not merely a procedural vote. A vote against ordering the previous question is a vote against the Democratic majority agenda and a vote to allow the opposition, at least for the moment, to offer an alternative plan. It is a vote about what the House should be debating.

Mr. Clarence Cannon's Precedents of the House of Representatives, (VI, 308-311) describes the vote on the previous question on the rule as "a motion to direct or control the consideration of the subject before the House being made by the Member in charge." To defeat the previous question is to give the opposition a chance to decide the subject before the House. Cannon cites the Speaker's ruling of January 13, 1920, to the effect that "the refusal of the House to sustain the demand for the previous question passes the control of the resolution to the opposition" in order to offer an amendment. On March 15, 1909, a member of the majority party offered a rule resolution. The House defeated the previous question and a member of the opposition rose to a parliamentary inquiry, asking who was entitled to recognition. Speaker Joseph G. Cannon (R-Illinois) said: "The previous question having been refused,

the gentleman from New York, Mr. Fitzgerald, who had asked the gentleman to yield to him for an amendment, is entitled to the first recognition."

Because the vote today may look bad for the Democratic majority they will say "the vote on the previous question is simply a vote on whether to proceed to an immediate vote on adopting the resolution . . . [and] has no substantive legislative or policy implications whatsoever." But that is not what they have always said. Listen to the definition of the previous question used in the Floor Procedures Manual published by the Rules Committee in the 109th Congress, (page 56). Here's how the Rules Committee described the rule using information from Congressional Quarterly's "American Congressional Dictionary": "If the previous question is defeated, control of debate shifts to the leading opposition member (usually the minority Floor Manager) who then manages an hour of debate and may offer a germane amendment to the pending business."

Deschler's Procedure in the U.S. House of Representatives, the subchapter titled "Amending Special Rules" states: "a refusal to order the previous question on such a rule [a special rule reported from the Committee on Rules] opens the resolution to amendment and further debate." (Chapter 21, section 21.2) Section 21.3 continues: "Upon rejection of the motion for the previous question on a resolution reported from the Committee on Rules, control shifts to the Member leading the opposition to the previous question, who may offer a proper amendment or motion and who controls the time for debate thereon."

Clearly, the vote on the previous question on a rule does have substantive policy implications. It is one of the only available tools for those who oppose the Democratic majority's agenda and allows those with alternative views the opportunity to offer an alternative plan.

Mr. POLIS. I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 23 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1215

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro