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CIVIL RIGHTS

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**CIVIL RIGHTS OF THE 4 MILLION U.S. CITIZENS
WHO RESIDE IN PUERTO RICO**

WHEREAS, Puerto Rico has been a territory of the United States for the past 109 years.

WHEREAS, the U.S. citizens who reside in Puerto Rico do not enjoy all the fundamental rights bestowed by the Constitution as their fellow citizens who reside in the 50 states.

WHEREAS, the current territorial arrangement deprives the U.S. citizens who reside in Puerto Rico with the human and civil right to vote and to have political participation in the government that carries out many decision making processes that may affect or have an impact in their daily lives.

WHEREAS, the U.S. citizens who reside in Puerto Rico do not have the right to vote for the President, Vice-President and voting members of Congress.

WHEREAS, the U.S. Supreme Court has legitimized the partial application of the U.S. Constitution as Congress has seen fit, based on the nefarious doctrine of territorial incorporation whereby Congress exercises constitutional authority and full discretion over Puerto Rico as a territorial possession belonging to the United States.

WHEREAS, such a policy has allowed for the territorial discrimination of the U.S. citizens who reside in Puerto Rico, keeping them in a condition that can only be described as *separate and unequal*.

WHEREAS, on October 17, 2006, former Governor Pedro Rosselló and the Unfinished Business of American Democracy Committee filed a petition before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in their individual capacities and on behalf of the 4 million U.S. citizens who reside in Puerto Rico.

WHEREAS, said petitioners request the aforementioned Commission to, among other things, find and declare that the voting rights denial at the national level to which the U.S. citizens who reside in Puerto Rico are subject constitutes a gross violation of 'The American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man' and 'The Inter-American

Democratic Charter', both of which the United States of America is a signatory state.

WHEREAS, there is a recent precedent that is very similar to this petition, as on December 29, 2003, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ruled against the United States of America in a petition filed on behalf of the citizens of the District of Columbia declaring, among other things, that the representation afforded to the residents of the District of Columbia in Congress is 'meaningless'.

WHEREAS, under international law, the consent of some of the victims whose human and civil rights have been violated does not condone, excuse or legitimize any government from its responsibility to provide and guarantee those rights that have been denied.

WHEREAS, the petition filed before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights does not seek to resolve the longstanding quest of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that LULAC fully supports this petition filed on behalf of the 4 million U.S. citizens who reside in Puerto Rico as the continued denial by our Government of their right to vote, to participate in government and to the equal enjoyment and exercise of each citizen's rights under the law is totally inconsistent with the fundamental principles of democracy that led to the establishment of our Nation; and formally requests the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to act in the most expeditious manner and provide recommendations that would assist our Government in remedying, once and for all, the current unlawful circumstances to which the 4 million U.S. citizens who reside in Puerto Rico have been subject for far too long.

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