



PRESS RELEASE
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The Puerto Rico Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Publishes its First Memorandum on the Effects of the Insular Cases and the Non-Incorporation Doctrine on the Civil Rights of Residents of Puerto Rico

The Puerto Rico Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (the Commission) announces the publication of its first memorandum as part of its study on the effects of the Insular Cases and the Non-Incorporation Doctrine on the civil rights of the residents of Puerto Rico. This is the first publication of the Advisory Committee, which was established in 2022, and is the first memorandum written in Spanish and translated to English by the Commission.

This memorandum is the first in a series that the Committee will develop over the course of its project, culminating in a final report. With a focus on a general overview of the topic, the Committee highlights a series of findings and recommendations identified in testimony received from subject matter experts and community representatives who spoke from historical, academic, and legal perspectives, as well as lived experiences. The testimony captured a wide breadth of information, from the historical context of the Insular Cases and the relationship between Puerto Rico and the federal government, to the effect on the quality of life of people impacted by the lack of full access to federal public programs, such as older adults, veterans, and individuals with disabilities. The Committee plans to develop its own recommendations as it moves forward with its project.

The findings identified in the testimony by the Committee focus on: the relationship of political subordination between the U.S. Government and Puerto Rico, unequal and discriminatory treatment towards Puerto Rico on behalf of the federal Government, the perspective that the Supreme Court is not the ideal vehicle through which to solve the problems caused by the Non-Incorporation Doctrine, contradictions in the U.S. citizenship of residents of Puerto Rico, the limited access to social welfare programs due to Puerto Rico's status as an unincorporated territory and the impact this has had on vulnerable communities, and how discrimination and differential treatment have directly affected the quality of life of the residents of Puerto Rico, causing an increase in displacement from the island.

Committee Chair Andrés Córdova Phelps said: "The Committee is grateful to all the panelists and members of the public who have participated in this project and have made this memorandum possible. We hope that this memorandum can help spread awareness about the reality the residents of Puerto Rico have faced while living in an unincorporated territory and that this is a positive step in the civil rights of this population."

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 56 Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at the state and local level. For information about the Commission, please visit us at www.usccr.gov and follow us on Facebook and LinkedIn.