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Latino Advocates Protect Wildlife Refuge in Puerto Rico

Latino and Environmental Coalition refocus Congress on an actual Puerto Rican Recovery

Washington, DC — The House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee unveiled the latest draft of the PROMESA Act which no longer jeopardizes thousands of acres of the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge. In reaction, a coalition of Hispanic advocacy and Environmental groups issued the following Statement:

The Latino community and our partners on environmental issues applaud the fact that this iteration of the bill eliminates a provision that would have conveyed 3,100 acres of the refuge and the cost to maintain it to the already struggling government of Puerto Rico. Past iterations of the bill contained this “poison pill” provision that jeopardized one of the most important economic engine of the island, endangered one of the most precious national refuges in the nation, and set a harmful national precedent by potentially privatizing public conservation lands.

The continued protection of the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge is a testament to the strength and unity among Latino and environmental advocates. The efforts to keep the refuge safe and to exclude language undermining the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) exemplify the collaborations needed to bring about a fair, healthy and effective Puerto Rican recovery that actually addresses the needs of the Puerto Rican people instead of playing political games with the future of the island.

While the island is fighting environmental justice battles on all fronts - from dirty incinerator proposals to toxic landfills – to attack the pristine wildlife refuge on Vieques outraged Puerto Ricans and Latinos across the nation. Thanks to the leadership of Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Raul Grijalva, and other legislators that stood up against this harmful provision, Congress can now focus its attention on solving problems instead of creating them.

Thanks to dedicated advocates in both the environmental and Hispanic advocacy communities who refused to allow harmful distractions to kill this important bill and worked together to call for revisions, the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge will remain complete, protected, and stimulating the economy in Vieques.

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Hispanic Federation is the nation’s premier Latino nonprofit membership organization. Founded in 1990, HF seeks to support Hispanic families and strengthen Latino institutions through work in the areas of education, health, immigration, civic engagement, economic empowerment, & the environment.

The **League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)** is the nation's oldest and largest Latino civil rights organization. Founded in 1929 and with over 135,000 members in 37 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, LULAC works to advance the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, housing, health and civil rights of the Hispanic population of the United States.

Earthjustice, the nation’s premier nonprofit environmental law organization, wields the power of law and the strength of partnership to protect people’s health, to preserve magnificent places and wildlife, to advance clean energy, and to combat climate change. Because the earth needs a good lawyer.

GreenLatinos, is a national non-profit organization that convenes a broad coalition of Latino leaders committed to addressing national, regional and local environmental, natural resources and conservation issues that significantly affect the health and welfare of the Latino community in the United States. GreenLatinos provides an inclusive table at which its members establish collaborative partnerships and networks to improve the environment; protect and promote conservation of land and other natural resources; amplify the voices of minority, low-income and tribal communities; and train, mentor, and promote the current and future generations of Latino environmental leaders for the benefit of the Latino community and beyond. GreenLatinos develops and advocates for policies and programs to advance this mission.