



## **FULFILLING AMERICA'S PROMISE TO THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO**

### ***Resolving Puerto Rico's Status Issue and Ensuring Puerto Rican Economic Empowerment***

*The United States acquired Puerto Rico in war from Spain in 1898. While our country has granted American citizenship to Puerto Ricans since 1917 and self-government on local affairs, Puerto Rico remains an unincorporated territory of the United States and its ultimate political status remains undetermined. Puerto Ricans want a President who will exercise leadership to finally resolve the question of the islands' ultimate political status.*

*Puerto Ricans have made important cultural and economic contributions to our nation. They have also proudly and bravely served in the United States military. Many have made the ultimate sacrifice to preserve our freedom, secure peace, and bring liberty and justice around the world. Puerto Ricans in uniform have sustained higher per capita service-connected disabilities than citizens of the States.*

*Despite these enormous contributions to the world's greatest democracy, however, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico's 3.9 million residents do not have voting representation in the government that makes their national laws.*

*All of Puerto Rico's political parties are based on visions of a governing arrangement that provides for democratically determined and implemented national laws but the parties are divided on what the options are.*

*The issue of Puerto Rico's ultimate status also raises questions of what economic and social policies are appropriate for the Commonwealth.*

*Additionally, Puerto Rico's territorial status permits the Commonwealth to be treated differently than the States in federal programs – mostly to the detriment of its people. Partly as a result, half of the population continues to live below the federal poverty level and the unemployment rate is twice that of the nation as a whole. This has forced many Puerto Ricans to move to the States to meet basic human needs and obtain greater opportunities.*

*As President, Wes Clark will work to rectify the injustices presented by the current status of Puerto Rico and to improve the quality of life for its residents by:*

- 1. Initiating a dialogue at the national and local levels on issues directly affecting Puerto Rico.*
- 2. Resolving the question of Puerto Rico's ultimate status.*
- 3. Striving for equality for Puerto Ricans in federal programs.*

## **INITIATING A DIALOGUE AT THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS ON ISSUES DIRECTLY AFFECTING PUERTO RICO**

Wes Clark will initiate a dialogue at the national and local level on issues directly affecting Puerto Rico. The Office of the President has direct responsibility for Puerto Rico issues. President Bush, however, has virtually ignored the islands' concerns, even eliminating the White House office that President Clinton had established to consider the Commonwealth's needs. As President, Wes Clark will apply three principles to initiate a dialogue on issues directly affecting the Puerto Rican people:

- *Responsibility*: Wes Clark will take his responsibilities to the residents of Puerto Rico just as seriously as he will take his responsibilities to the residents of the States.
- *Initiative*: Wes Clark will visit Puerto Rico during his presidency and meet with the islands' leaders and people.
- *Openness*: Wes Clark will restore full-time attention to Puerto Rico issues in the White House to ensure that the Commonwealth is consulted on issues affecting it and that its needs are considered within the national debate.

## **RESOLVING THE QUESTION OF PUERTO RICO'S ULTIMATE STATUS**

Wes Clark will seek to resolve the question of Puerto Rico's ultimate status during his presidency. President Clinton established the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status to work with Puerto Ricans and the Congress on the issues. President Bush has failed to exert leadership in this area, however, by waiting almost three years to activate it. When the Task Force was finally named in December 2003, President Bush delayed the deadline for its next report until the following presidential term. He also failed to spend the \$2.5 million that the Congress appropriated in 2000 for public information in Puerto Rico on the status proposals the President agrees to and a choice by voters among the islands' constitutionally viable status options. Wes Clark will work to resolve the question of Puerto Rico's ultimate status from Day One of his presidency by undertaking the following actions:

- *Double the Task Force's funding*. Wes Clark will restore the \$2.5 million appropriated to the Task Force and also double the amount, while maintaining this level of funding every year in future budgets until Puerto Rico's ultimate status is determined.
- *Accelerate the deadlines for Task Force reports*. Wes Clark will accelerate – instead of extend – the deadlines for the Task Force's reports on the issue.
- *Engage in an objective public education campaign on the constitutionally viable status options*. Wes Clark will ensure that objective public information is available to Puerto Ricans on their constitutionally viable status options – national sovereignty, either fully independent from or in a free association with the United States, or to join the Union as a State.
- *Work to authorize a referendum for the Puerto Rican people to choose*. Wes Clark will insist that the federal government authorize a referendum to ensure that the islands' voters can choose what the islands' ultimate status will be from among the constitutionally viable

options.

- *Implementing the choice of the Puerto Rican people.* If a Puerto Rican majority chooses one of these options for a new status, Wes Clark will make implementing the choice a priority of his administration.

### **STRIVING FOR EQUALITY FOR PUERTO RICANS IN FEDERAL PROGRAMS: WES CLARK'S LONG-TERM JOB RETENTION AND GROWTH PLAN FOR PUERTO RICO**

Wes Clark's economic focus on Puerto Rico will be to meet the needs of the many Puerto Ricans who have not been adequately helped by the economic policies of the past – including local businesses as well as individuals – by investing in their health and development. President Bush took office when the congressional committee chairman who blocked extension of the federal tax credit for capital investments, wages, and local taxes in Puerto Rico retired. But President Bush neither continued the proposal to extend Internal Revenue Service Section 30A nor proposed an alternative. He has also failed to propose improvements in the treatment of Puerto Ricans in need of federal social programs. Wes Clark will work with the islands' political leaders to develop new sustainable economic development proposals that create jobs and accelerate economic growth on the islands, while striving for equality in federal programs in the following areas:

- *Families First Tax Reform.* As part of his Families First Tax Reform, Wes Clark will consolidate and simplify the existing child tax breaks into one simple, partially refundable credit of \$2,250 per child. In particular, Wes Clark will push to have this credit apply to Puerto Rico in the same way it will apply in the States. In the interim, Wes Clark believes that existing child tax credits – including the refundable portion of the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit – should apply to families in Puerto Rico in the same manner in which they apply in the States, including providing partially refundable child credits for families with one or two children who are currently ineligible for credits in Puerto Rico.
- *Supplemental Security Income Grants.* Wes Clark will work to extend the Supplemental Security Income grants to the needy, aged, blind, and disabled in Puerto Rico, and to meet Puerto Rican needs in federal health care programs.
- *Section 30A.* Wes Clark will propose an extension of the Sec. 30A tax credit past 2005 to keep existing manufacturing jobs in Puerto Rico.
- *Enterprise and Empowerment Zones.* Wes Clark will seek to extend the Enterprise and Empowerment Zones benefits for investments in underdeveloped and depressed areas.
- *Trade and Regulatory Policies.* Wes Clark will work to expand Puerto Rico's markets and ensure that the islands' economic situation is considered in the development of new trade and regulatory policies. Moreover, Wes Clark will empower Puerto Rican based firms to facilitate and enhance trade between the United States and Latin America.
- *Federal Procurement.* Wes Clark will seek to maximize federal procurement opportunities for Puerto Rican businesses and research grants to Puerto Rican universities. Specifically, Wes Clark will seek to expand the opportunities available for local entrepreneurs to innovate

via grants offered by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the Department of Commerce and the Small Business Administration.