



Background Guide

*Unpayable:
The Puerto Rican Debt Crisis, 2017*



LETTER FROM THE DAIS

Hello Delegates,

Welcome to BUCS 2019! My name is Grace Bramley-Simmons, and I'll be your Crisis Manager for this conference. I'm a sophomore studying computer science from Portland, Maine. In my spare time I like to run, obsessively follow American politics, and ice skate. I've participated in MUN since high school, travelling to both high school and college conferences, and I have helped run committees for BUSUN, Brown's high school conference.

This committee will be simulating the complex negotiations involved in alleviating Puerto Rico's debt crisis, beginning with the swearing in of the 115th Congress in the United States and the Rosselló administration in Puerto Rico in January 2017. While this is a crisis committee, I would ask you to be thoughtful about crafting a workable, realistic, and politically feasible solution to Puerto Rico's deep issues of debt and poverty while also considering the future of Puerto Rico's relationship to the United States. Please note that in no situation will war or significant violence be considered realistic or acceptable in this committee—there will certainly be other ways of accomplishing your goals!

Good Luck!

Grace Bramley-Simmons

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BUCS VIII



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Delegates,

It is my privilege to welcome you to BUCS 2019. My name is Michael Chen, and I will be the Chair of the Senate Room, playing Lisa Murkowski. I am a freshman (likely) studying International Relations from Florence, Italy. I was raised in an European-style MUN environment, which I started in 8th grade. I have chaired in The Hague International Model United Nations (THIMUN) in 2016 and 2017, as well as Brown University Simulation of Model United Nations (BUSUN) in 2018.

Puerto Rico is in a moment of identity crisis and a position where change both in terms of statehood and in terms of its debt crisis, which the U.S. Senate needs to address carefully. Your ideas and creativity will be vital for us to collectively devise realistic solutions to address the issues under discussion. Please feel free to reach out to any of your student officers, should you need clarification or assistance of any kind. I look forward to welcoming you to the committee!

Sincerely yours,
Michael Chen
ussenate@browncrisis.org

BUCS VIII



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to BUCS 2019! I am Jason Gong, and I am a Freshman with an interest in studying Applied Mathematics, Computer Science, and Business Economics. I am honored to say that I am the chair of our Puerto Rican government for the 2017 Financial Crisis. While I only have experience directing (or co-chairing), I hope that I will be able to accommodate you from the role of chair as Governor Ricardo Roselló.

At the time of this simulation, Puerto Rico is at a pivotal point of its history. With a national debt reaching above 70 billion, the American territory and its governing bodies must determine how it will go about addressing its obligations to investors. With options ranging from statehood to independence and beyond on the table, every decision can make a meaningful impact on what is to come.

As individuals, you will have plenty of opportunities to make the most of your positions in the Puerto Rican government. Your cooperation and ingenuity has the potential to be a major determinant in the territory's fate, and it is important to use this power well. If you have any questions about the conference or are in need of assistance otherwise, please feel to reach out to any of the student officers.

Thank you, and I look forward to meeting you when we are in session!

Best Regards,

Jason Gong

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RULES OF PROCEDURE

The Cabinet of Ricardo Rosselló will follow standard rules of procedure, while the Senate Committee will follow slightly modified rules of procedure.

Both rooms will sit in a permanent moderated caucus (i.e. a speaker's lists will never be opened). The total duration, speaking time, and topic of the moderated caucus can be modified via a majority vote following a delegate's motion to do so. All other standard motions will be accepted or denied following a simple majority vote.

Unlike a traditional crisis committee, the **Senate room** will be limited in the type of documents it can pass in order to better simulate the proceedings of an actual Senate committee. The Senate committee can pass the following types of documents:

- **Press Release:** A document released to the public on a topic on behalf of the committee. Requires a simple majority and the support of the chair.
- **Memorandum:** A document sent to a specific individual or organization on behalf of the committee. Requires a simple majority and the support of the chair.

Individuals may make press releases and write memoranda through crisis notes. If a party wishes to take collective action (for instance, making a statement on behalf of the Democratic party), a draft with the signatures of a majority of present members of that party should be brought to the dais. No vote will be held on memoranda on behalf of political parties.

- **Subpoena:** The power to request documents or the presence of a witness in front of the committee. Requires a simple majority and the support of the chair.
- **Release a Bill from Committee to the Floor:** The Committee will periodically be referred legislation introduced in the House of Representatives, which it can then modify however it chooses and then release to the floor of the Senate for a vote.

For the purposes of this committee, the majority party (the Republicans) may assume that any bill reasonably in line with party positions will be introduced and passed for them in the House by Speaker Ryan. Bills to be voted on should be introduced to the dais, and will then be voted on via a placard vote to move out of committee and to the floor of the Senate proper. The backroom will then determine if a vote would have been held. If so, a roll call vote will then be taken in order to establish votes in favor or against the legislation. A floor vote will then be simulated by the backroom. In the event that the simulation fails to reach a 60 vote threshold, unless the bill presented falls under a specific exemption to the filibuster, it will be presumed that the vote would have been stopped by a filibuster and will not pass.



POSITION PAPERS

Please submit a position paper by the conference deadline **February 28, 2019**, to both the committee email puertorico2017@browncrisis.org and your room's chair email (puertorico@browncrisis.org for the Cabinet of Riccardo Rosselló and ussenate@browncrisis.org for the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources respectively) to qualify for awards, by February 24, 2019 if you wish to receive feedback. The position paper should cover your position on all topics and include a brief summary of the general positions of your delegate. The paper should be submitted as a Word document, saved with the title of your position in the name. Please limit the paper to one page with double-spaced type in 12-point font. Be sure also to include your name, school, and position in the body of your email and on the first page of your position paper.



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Puerto Rico Before 1898

Before the Age of Exploration, Puerto Rico was occupied by the Taíno people, who resided in a number of islands across the Caribbean.¹ The Taíno were organized into caiqués (roughly: chiefdoms), each of which was controlled by a chief who held significant power over the community.

The Taíno's way of life was interrupted with the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1493. He landed upon the island as part of his second voyage to the Americas, naming it San Juan Bautista and claiming it for Spain. Following this, Spanish settlers arrived in Puerto Rico and enslaved the native people as part of a system called repartimientos in order to mine gold and produce sugar for maximum profit. However, in the course of their intercontinental exchanges the Spanish brought many new diseases from Europe with them to the island. Possessing no immunity to these ailments, the Taíno was completely devastated. Having lost their primary labor force, the settlers began bringing over African slaves to remedy the shortage and resumed agricultural production.²

Colonial Puerto Rico remained under strict Spanish rule for a number of centuries, governed by the *Real y Supremo Consejo de Indias*, an arm of the Spanish monarchy. While

Spain had a nominal domestic parliament (*El Cortes*), the king, by way of *El Consejo*, held the final say over all administrative decisions made in the Caribbean. Over the years, the Puerto Rico's level of judicial and administrative independence fluctuated with the strength or weakness of the Crown in Spain. However, despite several revolts, the island never achieved independence from Spanish rule.

Centuries of remote and aloof governance by the Spanish resulted in a lack of proper infrastructure and development on the island; Puerto Rico in 1898 was poor, undereducated, and predominantly rural. While slavery was abolished by the Spanish government in 1873, most people were still forced to work on sugarcane, tobacco, and coffee plantations for lack of a better job opportunity, generally earning the equivalent of 15-30 cents a day.³ The Spanish government did not offer many public services and generally provided little support to the island, even though they mandated repayments of Spanish war debts from the common people (despite the fact that many of these wars were fought elsewhere).

The Spanish-American War and the United States Takeover of Puerto Rico

The beginnings of the Spanish-American war centered around a movement for indepen-

1 Abdul Rob, "Taíno: Indigenous Caribbeans", *Black History 360*. Published December 2, 2016. Accessed January 25, 2019. <https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/pre-colonial-history/taino-indigenous-caribbeans/>

2 José Trías Monge. *Puerto Rico: The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

3 "Abolition of Slavery in Puerto Rico" *The World of 1898: The Spanish-American War, Hispanic Division of the Library of Congress*. Accessed January 24, 2019. <https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/slaves.html>



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dence in Cuba in 1895. Several New York City-based newspapers recognized this rebellion as an opportunity to create flashy headlines and sensationalized stories that would expand their businesses; though this so-called yellow journalism had little influence outside of New York, the American public gradually began to favor Cuba at Spain's expense, painting Spain as an injudicious and backwards power. This attitude only fueled the fire when in April of 1898, a U.S. battleship, the U.S.S. Maine, mysteriously experienced an explosion and sank in the harbor of Havana. Though it is still uncertain today whether or not the Spanish were involved, the American media immediately blamed the incident on Spain. Shortly thereafter, the United States Congress declared war.⁴ The war lasted a little over 6 months, and ended with the Treaty of Paris, which resulted in Spain losing control of its historical empire in the Americas.

The military moves of the Spanish-American war, which was famously called a “splendid little war” by then United States Secretary of State John Hay, did not affect Puerto Rico to any great degree; the takeover of the island took only 19 days and resulted in 22 total casualties.⁵ However, Puerto Rico was considered a critical strategic target for the United States, both for its natural resources and its potential as a military and economic foothold in the Caribbean, as it provided a more accessible route to Central and South America that

Spain could not utilize. As such, while Cuba was granted its independence via the Treaty of Paris, control of Puerto Rico (as well as Guam and the Philippines), was ceded to the United States.

Puerto Rico under American Control (1898-2017)

Having been under the strict thumb of Spanish rule for three hundred years, the citizenry of Puerto Rico was generally amenable to the transfer of power following the Spanish-American War because it believed the U.S. would provide the island with more freedoms. However, the United States conquest of Puerto Rico frustrated the Puerto Rican political elite; Spain had previously promised them political autonomy, whereas the U.S. implemented military rule until establishing a formal foreign policy with the passage of The Foraker Act in 1900.⁶

The Foraker Act designated Puerto Rico as an “unorganized territory,” meaning that although Puerto Ricans were not granted U.S. citizenship, they could receive U.S. protection. Additionally, the act appointed a U.S.-chosen governor for the island and created an 11 member council, comprised of mostly U.S. appointees, to direct the island's bureaus and a House of Delegates with 35 members that would be chosen by popular election every two years. Following protest by the House

4 “The Spanish American War” *The World of 1898: The Spanish-American War*, Hispanic Division of the Library of Congress. Accessed January 24, 2019. <http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/intro.html>

5 Monge.

6 “Puerto Rico”, *History, Art and Archives, United States House of Representatives*. Accessed January 23, 2019. <https://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/HAIC/Historical-Essays/Foreign-Domestic/Puerto-Rico/>



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of Delegates, the U.S. revised The Foraker Act with the Jones-Shafroth Act. This piece of legislation created a Senate of 19 members and increased the number of representatives in the House of Delegates from 35 to 39. Most importantly, the Jones-Shafroth Act granted U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans. However, the United States still maintained essentially complete control over the region as Puerto Rico remained classified as a U.S. territory.

In Puerto Rico, American citizenship continued to be a hotly contested topic during the negotiation periods for both of the aforementioned bills. Different ideologies concerning this helped lead to the creation of opposing political parties within Puerto Rico and leading to a Puerto Rican identity crisis, about which Félix Córdova Dávila, testifying in front of the House Committee on Insular Affairs, stated:

“Are we foreigners? No; because we are American citizens, and no citizen of the United States can be a foreigner within the boundaries of the Nation. Are we a part of the Union? No; because we are an unincorporated Territory under the rulings of the Supreme Court. Can you find a proper definition for this organized and yet unincorporated Territory, for this piece of ground belonging to but not forming part of the United States? Under the rulings of the courts of justice we are neither flesh, fish, nor fowl. We are

neither a part nor a whole. We are nothing; and it seems to me if we are not allowed to be part of the Union we should be allowed to be a whole entity with full and complete control of our internal affairs.”⁷

The political status of Puerto Rico evolved slightly in 1953 with United Nations General Assembly’s passage of Resolution 748 (VIII). Strongly supported by the United States, the document officially recognized Puerto Rico as a Commonwealth of the United States, stating that “the people of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico . . . have achieved a new constitutional status.”⁸ However, this feat was not as monumental as it would initially appear. While some states such as Virginia and Massachusetts style themselves as “Commonwealths,” they are treated as states under the United States Constitution. However, the federal government also uses the term “Commonwealth” to refer to certain territories, which it describes as “a political unit that is like a U.S. state but that pays no federal taxes and has only a representative in Congress who does not vote.”⁹ Commonwealth status thus essentially began in Puerto Rico after Congress allowed the island to create its own Senate (via the aforementioned Jones-Shafroth Act), but still maintained complete control

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “Resolution 748 (III)”, *United Nations General Assembly*, 1959. Accessed January 25, 2019. [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/748\(VIII\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/748(VIII))

⁹ “What’s a Commonwealth?” *Puerto Rico 51st State*. Accessed January 24, 2019. <http://www.pr51st.com/whats-a-commonwealth/>



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over the region. Commonwealth status does not provide any privileges that are not already available to any other United States territory. This was described by the 2007 President's Task Force on Puerto Rico, which stated that "The commonwealth system does not ... describe a legal status different from Puerto Rico's constitutional status as a 'territory' subject to congress's plenary authority." A similar task force in 2011 reaffirmed the point, stating that Puerto Rico remains "subject to the Territory Clause of the U.S. Constitution."¹⁰ Despite the decorative name of "Commonwealth," Puerto Rico is a United States Territory just like any other.

Being an unincorporated territory of the United States provides residents with "many of the rights enjoyed by U.S. citizens in the 50 states," such as American citizenship.¹¹ However, residents do not have true representation within the United States government as they cannot vote in national elections and do not have a voting representative within the federal government. Puerto Rico's single representative in the House of Representatives is referred to as a delegate or "Resident Commissioner," and is not allowed to vote on any legislation.¹²

¹⁰ "The Meaning of 'Commonwealth'," *Puerto Rico Report*. Accessed January 25, 2019. <https://www.puertoricoreport.com/the-meaning-of-commonwealth/#.XGiqMy2ZPs2>

¹¹ "U.S. Insular Areas: Application of the US Constitution" *Report to the Chairman, Committee on Resources, House of Representatives*. November, 1997. Accessed January 25, 2019. <https://www.gao.gov/archive/1998/og98005.pdf>

¹² "Puerto Rico", *Members of Congress*. Accessed January 21, 2019. <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members/PR>

The Puerto Rican Economy (1947-2017)

After World War II, the then-governor of Puerto Rico, Luíz Muñez Marín, began an intense industrialization program in Puerto Rico called "Operation Bootstrap," which aimed to bring foreign industrial companies (especially those from the U.S.) to the island by offering incentives for relocation.¹³ Through this program, the Puerto Rican government offered these companies a series of investments and corporate tax breaks as well as a reduction in local income taxes and a low minimum wage requirement. As a result of these policies, many manufacturers moved their companies to Puerto Rico and for a time the island flourished; between 1950 and 1980, Puerto Rico's manufacturing sector grew from 16% of annual GNP to 48%.¹⁴

This path of relative economic peace and political stability continued through the early 1990s, though it did not last. Notable amongst the benefits Operation Bootstrap provided to foreign industries was a 1976 United States tax break known as Section 936, which exempted American manufacturing companies from paying corporate income taxes on profits made in U.S. territories. While beneficial for these companies, Section 936 was very costly to the U.S. Treasury and somewhat uninten-

¹³ "Puerto Rico", *History.com*. Accessed January 24, 2019. <https://www.history.com/topics/us-states/puerto-rico-history>

¹⁴ John W. Schoen, "Here's How An Obscure Tax Change Sank Puerto Rico's Economy" *CNBC Economy*. Published September 26, 2017. Accessed January 24, 2019. <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/09/26/heres-how-an-obscure-tax-change-sank-puerto-ricos-economy.html>



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tionally placed a tax burden on domestic Puerto Rican companies. In 1996, the Clinton administration passed a law to phase out Section 936 over 10 years, dismissing it as a form of corporate welfare. This resulted in both an increased tax burden on domestic companies and a drastic reduction in the number of foreign manufacturers, and is generally cited as one of the principle reasons for Puerto Rico's contemporary economic decline.

Although Operation Bootstrap bolstered Puerto Rico for a time, its benefits were not received by the entire population. While the program may have been successful for the United States, it quickly caused a decline of job opportunities within Puerto Rico within the traditional agricultural sector, as the territory was fast-tracked into industrialization. Between 1950 and 1970, this – as well as the complete integration of Puerto Rico's economy into that of the United States – led to a mass migration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. (particularly New York City) in search of employment. Known as “La Gran Migración,” 25 percent of Puerto Rico's total population, about 500,000 people, immigrated to the U.S. during this time.

Today, Puerto Rico's agricultural industry continues to decline. Manufacturing is now the dominant industry, comprising 46% of total GDP.¹⁵ Total economic growth for the island has been negative since 2006, and, according to the United States Census, Puerto Rico's per-capita income in 2017 was just

¹⁵ “QuickFacts: Puerto Rico”, *United States Census Bureau*. Accessed January 23, 2019. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/pr/PST045218>

\$12,081 with a poverty rate of 44%. The island's high school graduation rate is 75%, and only a quarter of residents hold a college degree.. Moreover, population growth has fluctuated between negative 10% and 14% over the past eight years due to emigration. As of July 2017, the population of Puerto Rico was 3,337,177, a decrease of 400,000 since 2010.

Politics and Power in Puerto Rico

Puerto Rican political parties differ from the national political parties of the United States. There are three main political parties to be aware of:

- The New Progressive Party (Partido Nuevo Progresista, or PNP) is Puerto Rico's rightmost party, though it is only considered center-right on the national political scale.¹⁶ In the 2016 election, they won a the Governorship and a supermajority in both branches of Puerto Rico's legislature. The PNP supports statehood for Puerto Rico and is generally centrist on social issues. Members of the PNP are affiliated with both Democratic and Republican mainland politicians. The PNP currently supports paying all debts in principal, management of government spending, and working towards statehood as a response to the debt crisis.

¹⁶ Eugene Scott, “Who Are Trump's Political Allies in Puerto Rico? Explaining the Island's Political Factions”, *The Washington Post*. Published October 3, 2017. Accessed January 23, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/10/03/who-are-trumps-political-allies-in-puerto-rico-explaining-the-islands-political-factions/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ff6a75bfab16



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- The Popular Democratic Party (Partido Popular Democrático, or PPD) is Puerto Rico's second biggest political party. They are to the left of the PNP but also describe themselves as “centrist”. They support maintaining Commonwealth status for Puerto Rico, though they advocate for increased autonomy from the United States, especially when concerning negotiating with foreign governments, and support UN discussion of Puerto Rico's situation
- The last major political party is the Puerto Rican Independence Party (Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, or PIP), which describes itself as a “social democratic” party and supports complete independence for the island. It is currently much smaller than the other two parties.

The Debt Crisis

Puerto Rico's debt crisis is one of the urgent problems facing the island. In early 2017, Puerto Rico owed approximately 70 billion dollars, mainly in the form of municipal bonds.¹⁷ Puerto Rico managed to accumulate this debt mainly through the repeal of Section 933, a reliance on deficit spending to combat increased poverty, and their exclusion from Chapter 9 of the United States Bankruptcy Code.¹⁸

Chapter 9 of the U.S. bankruptcy code allows

¹⁷ Mary Williams Walsh, “How Puerto Rico Is Grappling With a Debt Crisis” *The New York Times*. Published May 6, 2017. Access January 25, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/business/dealbook/puerto-rico-debt-bankruptcy.html>

¹⁸ “Chapter 9 – Bankruptcy Basics” *United States*

“States” to authorize their municipalities to obtain debt relief from the Federal government. When Chapter 9 was passed in 1938, United States territories such as Puerto Rico were allowed to declare bankruptcy under this system. However, in 1984, Congress passed a specific exclusion forbidding Puerto Rico (and, notably, the District of Columbia) from declaring Chapter 9, despite lacking any specific reason for doing so.¹⁹ Then, in 1996, in order to increase federal revenue, Congress phased out a tax break for companies manufacturing goods in Puerto Rico. Manufacturing and pharmaceutical companies gradually began to leave the island, signalling the beginning of an economic recession. But, rather than cut services to make up for a decrease in revenue, the Puerto Rican government began to borrow more money in order to keep the government running with the same level of services as it had been before. This money was predominantly borrowed through the sale of municipal bonds, or small loans made by private citizens to the government with the expectation that they will be paid back with interest at a future date.

Puerto Rican bonds were especially attractive because they were “triple tax exempt”, meaning that investors didn't have to pay federal, state, or local tax on any earnings, regardless of where the investor lived. Puerto Rico's constitution also obligates it to pay its debts before funding government services, making Puerto Rico bonds seem especially reli-

Courts. Accessed January 26, 2019. <https://www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/bankruptcy/bankruptcy-basics/chapter-9-bankruptcy-basics>

¹⁹ Walsh.



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able.²⁰ Wall Street investing firms and hedge funds therefore decided significantly invest in these bonds which made their way into other investment funds such as retirement and pension accounts. By 2011, Puerto Rico's total debt had reached about \$70 billion, compared to a GDP of around \$100 billion, and banks began to realize that Puerto Rico was no longer capable of paying these debts. Instead of removing these now-risky investments from portfolios, however, many banks continued to invest in Puerto Rican bonds. These bonds were often specifically marketed to Puerto Rican citizens and therefore included as part of investment packages that did not meet federal standards for transparency.

Thus, in 2013, the bond system collapsed. Bond prices fell sharply, and their rating was degraded by rating agencies from investment-grade to junk status. However, instead of stopping the issuing of bonds, the Puerto Rican government made one last bond offering, striking a deal with Wall Street to sell \$3.5 billion in bonds at an 8.72% yield, the largest junk bond offering in United States history.²¹ Yet due to Puerto Rico's constitutional obligations, a significant portion of this revenue was then used to make payments on

older debt to large banks, and many of the banks partaking in the deal receiving payments on debt they already owned.²²

Disenfranchisement and United Nations Recommendations

Since the passage of Resolution 748 (VIII) that established Puerto Rico as a U.S. Commonwealth, the United Nations has not seriously discussed or made changes to Puerto Rico's commonwealth status in order to further the island's independence despite various requests from activists and passage of UN resolutions against colonialism, such as Resolution 1514 (XV) which created the Special Decolonization Committee in 1961 to focus on decolonization across the globe.²³ On June 20th, 2016, this committee called upon the United States to "assume its responsibility to expedite a process that would allow the people of Puerto Rico to exercise fully their right to self-determination and independence." Additionally, this resolution requested that the United States address the "economic and social needs, including unemployment, marginalization, insolvency and poverty" within Puerto Rico.²⁴ In short, as stated in a United Nations press release, the Special Committee "requested that the General Assembly consid-

20 Laura Sullivan, "How Puerto Rico's Debt Created A Perfect Storm Before the Storm", *NPR*. Published May 2, 2018. Accessed January 24, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/2018/05/02/607032585/how-puerto-ricos-debt-created-a-perfect-storm-before-the-storm>

21 Michael Corkery, "Demand Stronger Than Expected for Puerto Rico Debt", *DealBook*. Published March 11, 2014. Accessed January 24, 2019. <https://dealbook.nytimes.com/2014/03/11/puerto-ricos-debt-sale-is-met-with-strong-demand/>

22 Sullivan.

23 Ana M. Lopez and Gabriela Reardon, "Puerto Rico at the United Nations", *nacla.org*. November 26, 2007. Accessed January 23, 2019. <https://nacla.org/article/puerto-rico-united-nations>

24 "Special Committee on Decolonization Approves Text Calling upon United States Government to Expedite Self-Determination Process for Puerto Rico", *United Nations*. Published June 20, 2016. Accessed January 24, 2019. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/gacol3296.doc.htm>



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er comprehensively the question of Puerto Rico in all its aspects, and decide on that issue as soon as possible.” The United States has yet to implement any of these suggestions.

The Statehood Question

The Statehood Movement in Puerto Rico is the culmination of years of dissatisfaction with the lack of representation granted to the Puerto Rican people through commonwealth status.²⁵ As of January 2017, four referendums have been held on the issue, though none have been significant enough to be seriously considered by Congress to grant Puerto Rico statehood. The most recent referendum on the issue was in 2012, with 54% of Puerto Ricans rejecting Puerto Rico’s current status, and the majority of those voters believing Puerto Rico should become a state.

While statehood would provide a solution to many of Puerto Rico’s financial problems by providing the island with access to federal aid programs Chapter 9 Bankruptcy, it is still a controversial issue on the island. The issue of statehood is rooted in Puerto Rican identity, and some believe that the reduction in Puerto Rico’s autonomy, including increased regulation and taxes, would not be worth it. In addition, while politicians from both parties have paid lip service to Puerto Rican statehood, the United States has never truly presented Puerto Rico with the opportunity to do so.

25 Alexia Fernández Campell, “Puerto Rico’s Push for Statehood, Explained” *Vox.com* Published September 24, 2018. Accessed January 27, 2019. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/1/11/15782544/puerto-rico-push-es-for-statehood-explained>

Congress has stated that they will not consider statehood without the assurance that it is the will of the Puerto Rican people, and so the first steps for the new governor, if he chooses to pursue statehood, may be to hold another referendum.

A Brief Overview of the American Political System

The Federal Government of the United States is comprised of three branches: the Legislature, the Executive, and the Judiciary.

The Legislature is a bicameral representative body (often collectively referred to as Congress) and is composed of the House of Representatives (to which seats are assigned based on population) and the Senate (which has two Senators from every state).²⁶ All federal legislation dealing with revenue must be introduced in the House before being passed with a simple majority in both the House and the Senate, though the Senate may effectively introduce legislation by modifying bills brought before it which are then sent back to the House.²⁷ Significant legislation supported by a simple majority but not a supermajority may be blocked in the Senate by the Majority Leader refusing to hold a floor vote or by

26 “Learn About the United States: Quick Civics Lessons for the Naturalization Test”. *U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services*. Accessed January 27, 2019. https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Office%20of%20Citizenship/Citizenship%20Resource%20Center%20Site/Publications/PDFs/M-638_red.pdf

27 “Government 101: How a Bill Becomes a Law” *votesmart.org* Accessed January 24, 2019. <https://votesmart.org/education/how-a-bill-becomes-law#.XGi9wi2ZPs2>



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any Senator via filibuster. The President may veto any legislation passed by Congress, though Congress may override that veto with a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote in each chamber. The House and the Senate may also conduct investigations, determine the federal budget and authorize sanctions, among other responsibilities. In order to organize the execution of these duties, both chambers are divided into committees which each have their own powers, responsibilities, and rules of procedure.

The Executive is headed by the President, who is the Commander in Chief of the armed forces and can take limited direct action via executive order.²⁸ The executive branch also administers all federal agencies through the Cabinet of the President, which is comprised of the heads of 15 agencies and the Vice President. The President is elected once every 4 years via a representative process known as the Electoral College, which determines the amount of votes available to states based on how many Members of Congress they have.

The Judiciary is comprised of the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) and 13 District Courts.²⁹ Judges are appointed to these offices by the President and confirmed by the Senate. They have what is known as the power of “judicial review,” meaning they are responsible for determining the constitutionality of laws brought before them as a check on the other two branches of government.

28 “Learn About the United States: Quick Civics Lessons for the Naturalization Test”

29 Ibid.

Politics and Power in the United States

Since the mid-19th century, the United States has been controlled by two political parties: the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. While the values of both parties have shifted considerably over the course of history, the Democratic Party currently takes relatively progressive stances on most issues, including taxation, immigration, health care, and environmental issues. The Republican party, meanwhile supports more conservative policies in these same areas. As of January 2017, the Republicans control all three branches of government, with a 51-seat majority in the Senate (out of 100), a 238-seat majority in the House (out of 435), and the Presidency. While the courts are theoretically independent of political parties, five of the nine Supreme Court Justices are generally considered more conservative, though Justice Kennedy occasionally sides with the liberal wing of the court, especially on social issues such as gay marriage.

Puerto Rico currently only has non-voting representatives to the House, with no voice in the Senate or in presidential elections.³⁰ However, if Puerto Rico were granted statehood, they would be granted two Senate seats and House seats redistributed from other states. Both Puerto Rican political parties are relatively left-leaning when compared to the positions of the Republican party, and, given the slim majority Republicans currently hold in the Senate, the election of liberal

30 Campbell.



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Senators from Puerto Rico has the potential to significantly shift the balance of power in Washington as well as influence the Electoral College.

The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

The United States Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is responsible for:

“Energy resources and development, including regulation, conservation, strategic petroleum reserves and appliance standards; nuclear energy; Indian affairs; public lands and their renewable resources; surface mining, Federal coal, oil, and gas, other mineral leasing; territories and insular possessions; and water resources.”³¹

“Territories and insular possessions” includes management of Puerto Rican affairs, including those unrelated to land, such as regulation and debt management programs.

PROMESA and Senate Actions in Puerto Rico

In mid 2016, with a \$2 billion payment looming that seemed unpayable for Puerto Rico, President Barack Obama signed the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic

Stability Act, known as PROMESA (which means “promise” in Spanish).³² PROMESA formed a independent ‘fiscal control board’, composed of seven members who do not answer to the island government. This board was granted the power to force Puerto Rico to both balance its budget and to make agreements with bondholders. PROMESA also allowed the Puerto Rican government to lower the minimum wage to \$4.25 dollars an hour. However, while PROMESA allows some debt restructuring for the island, it doesn’t provide money to encourage economic recovery, and many believe the cost of reducing Puerto Rico’s autonomy is too high for what PROMESA offers.

³¹ “About”, *energy.state.gov*. Accessed January 24, 2019. <https://www.energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/>

³² Patricia Guadalupe, “Here’s How PROMESA Aims to Tackle Puerto Rico’s Debt”, *NBC*. Published June 30, 2016. Accessed January 23, 2019. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/here-s-how-promesa-aims-tackle-puerto-rico-s-debt-n601741>



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Cabinet of Ricardo Rosselló

- How much of a priority is statehood? If so, what are some strategies to get Congress to consider it?
- If statehood isn't a possibility, what does Puerto Rico want from the United States government? What are some realistic goals?
- How acceptable a solution is PROMESA? What could be done to improve it?
- What can be done to raise the quality of life for Puerto Ricans while austerity measures are put into effect?

United States Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

- How much (if any) support is politically feasible for the United States to give to Puerto Rico?
- What solutions could avoid a filibuster while being acceptable to the President and Majority Leader?
- Should statehood be seriously considered for the island?



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Cabinet of Ricardo Rosselló

Raúl Maldonado – Secretary of the Treasury

Maldonado is a certified public accountant and the current Secretary of the Treasury of Puerto Rico. Before his appointment, he worked as the Assistant Secretary of Internal Revenue Service of Puerto Rico and in the private sector at firms such as Ernst & Young. As the Secretary of the Treasury, he is the chief financial officer for the island, and he is responsible for overseeing the collection of taxes and the distribution of money to other departments.¹

Manuel Laboy Rivera – Secretary of Economic Development and Commerce

Laboy received a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Puerto Rico–Managüez and a masters degree in business administration from the University of Turabo.² In addition to his public sector career, he is also a certified engineer and serves on many different boards of directors, including the Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company and the Puerto Rico Science and Technology Trust. His department is responsible for strengthening Puerto Rico's economy, including encouraging private sector growth,

1 “Governor Rosselló Announces New Appointments to His Cabinet” *La Fortaleza*. Published July 31, 2018. <https://www.fortaleza.pr.gov/content/governor-rossell-announces-new-appointments-his-cabinet>

2 “About Manuel Laboy Rivera”, *Government of Puerto Rico* Accessed January 29, 2019. <http://www.camarapr.org/Pres-Lamboy/PROMESA/bios/Bio-Manuel-Laboy-English.pdf>

entrepreneurship, and attracting companies to the island.

Julia Keleher – Secretary of Education

After graduating with a Masters degree from the University of Pennsylvania, Keleher first worked in the United States Department of Education before founding the consulting firm Keleher & Associates in New York.³ As the Secretary of Education, she is responsible for overseeing Puerto Rico's approximately 850 schools, which serve about 300,000 students.

Carlos Flores Ortega – Secretary of Agriculture

Flores graduated from the University of Puerto Rico–Managüez, where he received a Bachelor's Degree in Horticulture and a Masters in Plant Physiology.⁴ He has previously served as the Executive Director for the Agricultural Commission for both legislative bodies as well as as Subsecretary of Agriculture. The Department of Agriculture is responsible for managing Puerto Rico's agricultural sector with a focus on economic growth and managing food insecurity.

3 “About” Government of Puerto Rico Accessed January 28, 2019. https://www.nagb.gov/governing-board/board-members/julia_keleher.html

4 “About” Government of Puerto Rico Accessed January 27, 2019. <https://www.metro.pr/pr/noticias/2016/12/15/rossello-anuncia-designado-hacienda.html>



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Cabinet of Ricardo Rosselló

Michael Pierluisi –

Secretary of Consumer Affairs

Pierluisi is the son of Pedro Pierluisi, one of Governor Rosselló's opponents in the NPP primary.⁵ He graduated with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration (with a concentration in finance) from the University of Villanova, and then graduated Summa Cum Laude from the University of Puerto Rico's law school. Before his appointment, he worked in private sector commercial law. His department, the Department of Consumer Affairs or DACO, is responsible for protecting Puerto Rican consumer's rights.

Erik Rolón –

Secretary of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Before serving in the Rosselló administration, Rolón served as a municipal judge in the Judicial Region of Arecibo, including as a senior judge by appointment for a year.⁶ As head of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation of Puerto Rico, he is responsible for overseeing the management of Puerto Rico's prisons and prison population.

5 "About", *Government of Puerto Rico*. Accessed January 27, 2019. <https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/gobierno-politica/nota/rossellocolocaauhijodepedropierluisiensugabinete-1193826/>

6 "About", *Government of Puerto Rico*. Accessed January 28, 2019. <https://www.telemundopr.com/noticias/destacados/Erik-Rolon-tambien-sera-subsecretario-de-la-Gobernacion-505313192.html>

William Villafañe –

Chief of Staff

Villafañe graduated with a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Puerto Rico, and a law degree from the Interamerican University of Puerto Rico School of Law.⁷ Before working as Rosselló's chief of staff, he worked as a legislative advisor for the Puerto Rico Assembly, served as an advisor for the Puerto Rico Commission on Public Service, and was the secretary general for the New Progressive Party. As chief of staff, he directly assists the governor, and his responsibilities include managing and supervising other departments, and gathering information for the governor.

Glorimar Andújar –

Secretary of Family Affairs

A lawyer originally from Utaduo, her position as Secretary of the Family is Andujar's first role in public service. As Secretary of Family Affairs, she is responsible for overseeing programming related to children and families, including family benefits.

Rafael Rodríguez Mercado –

Secretary of Health

Mercado graduated from the Río Piedras campus of the University of Puerto Rico in 1983 with a Bachelor's degree in Chemistry, and worked as a chemist for the Environ-

7 "About", *Government of Puerto Rico* Accessed January 28, 2019. <https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/politica/nota/arrancanlosnombramientosdericardorossello-2267014/>



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mental Quality Board from 1983 to 1984.⁸ He then received a medical degree from the University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine, before studying endovascular neurosurgery at the University of New York at Buffalo. As one of the only endovascular neurosurgeons in Puerto Rico, he continues to practice medicine alongside his duties as Secretary of Health, which include managing health standards and promoting general public health, as well as coordinating with the United States Department of Health.

Fernando Gil – Secretary of Housing

Gil graduated from the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science in 1999, and then went on to obtain a law degree from the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico, and a Masters of Laws in International Business from American University.⁹ Before his appointment, he served as Associate Administrator of the Puerto Rico Public Housing Administrator. As Secretary of Housing, Gil is responsible for promoting homeownership, and managing affordable housing projects and community assistance in Puerto Rico, as well as coordinating aid from the U.S. Department of Hous-

⁸ "About", *Government of Puerto Rico*. Accessed January 26, 2019. <http://www.agencias.pr.gov/agencias/secretariado/ProgramasServicios/Pages/default.aspx>

⁹ "About", *Government of Puerto Rico*. Accessed January 29, 2019. <http://www.presupuesto.gobierno.pr/PresupuestosAnteriores/af2003/baseLegal/BASE%20LEGAL/078/Ley97.htm>

ing and Urban Development.

Wanda Vásquez Garcet – Attorney General

Vásquez was born in San Juan, and grew up in the Guyanabo Region of Puerto Rico. She worked for the Puerto Rico Department of Housing in the 1980s, before working as a District Attorney for the Puerto Rico Department of Justice, and then the head of the Office of Women's Rights. As head of the Department of Justice, she is responsible for the enforcement of laws and the administration of justice for the island.

Carlos Saavedra Gutiérrez – Secretary of Labor and Human Resources

Gutiérrez graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from the University of Puerto Rico at Rio Piedras, followed by a J.D. from the University of Puerto Rico School of Law, where he served on the Law Review. He then served as a law clerk on for the Puerto Rico Supreme Court, before entering private practice for a number of years. As Secretary of the Department of Labor and Human Resources, he is responsible for overseeing the implementation of labor relations, occupational safety, unemployment, and other labor issues

Tania Vásquez – Secretary of Natural and Environmental Resources

As well as serving as the Secretary of Natural and Environmental Resources, Vásquez also



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serves as President of the Environmental Quality Board. As Secretary of Environmental Resources, she is responsible for overseeing the management of Puerto Rico's natural resources and environmental protection, including through ecotourism, eco-friendly buildings, and other initiatives.

Luis G. Rivera Marín – Secretary of State

Rivera graduated from the Colegio Maristas, where he was friends with Luis Fortuño, the future governor of Puerto Rico.¹⁰ He then went on to receive a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, a M.B.A. from New York University, and a J.D. from the University of Puerto Rico School of Law. He served under Fortuño as the Secretary of Consumer Affairs, as well as becoming the director of the Puerto Rico Tourism Company. As Secretary of State, he is responsible for representing Puerto Rico in "matters of Foreign and Consular Affairs of the U.S. territory."

Carlos Contreras – Secretary of Transportation and Public Works

Contreras graduated with his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in civil engineering from the University of Puerto Rico at Managüez, and is the first blind person to hold the office of

Secretary of Transportation.¹¹ He also serves as the executive director of the Puerto Rico Highways and Transportation Authority. As the Secretary of Transportation, he is responsible for overseeing Puerto Rico's public roadways, bus systems, and other forms of transportation, as well as public projects such as bridges and highways.

10 "About", *Government of Puerto Rico*. Accessed January 26, 2019. https://www.elvocero.com/gobierno/agencias/contin-an-los-nombramientos-para-el-gabinete-de-rossell/article_282ae433-bc07-52d0-91d3-7ce803c3f978.html

11 "About", *Government of Puerto Rico*. Accessed January 26, 2019. <https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/puerto-rico/nota/luisgerardoriveramarinesunsecretariorepletodepasion-510734/>



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Republicans:

Jeff Flake (R-AZ)

Flake is a Senator from Arizona and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.¹ Prior to his election to the Senate in 2012, Flake was a member of the House of Representatives (2001-2013). He currently serves as majority member for the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the Judiciary Committee, and the Foreign Relations Committee, where he also serves as chairman for the Subcommittee on African Affairs. Although a staunch conservative and a believer in less government and other traditionally Republican values, Flake has been one of the few Senators who has openly criticized Donald Trump and was part of the “Gang of Eight”, a bipartisan group of eight Senators who sought to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill that expired in 2013 after the end of the 113th Congress.

Cory Gardner (R-CO)

Gardner is the junior Senator for Colorado.² A fifth-generation Coloradan, Gardner began serving in the Colorado House of Representatives in 2005, serving as Minority Whip; during his time in this body, he became known for his expertise in natural resource and agricultural policy. Gardner was elected

to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2010 and to the Senate in 2015. Gardner currently serves as a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee and Chairman of the Energy Subcommittee. In addition, Gardner serves on the Foreign Relations Committee, the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, and he is also the Chairman of the Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy. As of 2017, Gardner was ranked as the 8th most bipartisan Senator by The Lugar Center; he is focused on expanding the economy, creating jobs, and promoting common sense energy reforms.

Mike Lee (R-UT)

Lee is the senior Senator from Utah, a libertarian-leaning conservative, and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.³ He began his career as clerk in the U.S. District Court for the District of Utah, later becoming a clerk for future Supreme Court Justice Judge Samuel Alito on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. Throughout his legal career both in the public and private sector, Lee specialized in appellate and Supreme Court litigation, garnering a reputation for his thorough understanding of the Constitution. Elected to the Senate in 2010, Lee is a member of the Judiciary Committee, and serves as Chairman of the Antitrust, Competition Policy and Consumer Rights Subcommittee. Furthermore, he is the

1 “About”, flake.senate.gov Accessed January 29, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170111233122/http://www.flake.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/about-jeff>

2 “About”, gardner.senate.gov Accessed January 29, 2019. <https://www.gardner.senate.gov/about-cory/biography>

3 “About”, lee.senate.gov Accessed January 28, 2019. <https://www.lee.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/about-mike>



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Chairman of the Water and Power Subcommittee of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, alongside his position on the Commerce Committee and the Joint Economic Committee.

Marco Rubio (R-FL)

Rubio is the senior Senator from Florida and a former Republican candidate for the 2016 Presidential elections.⁴ He was a member of the House of Representatives from 2000 to 2008, and was Speaker of the House during his last two years as a member of the House. After a two year tenure at Florida International University, Rubio was elected to the Senate in 2010. He currently serves as the chair of the Commerce Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard as well as the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights and Global Women's Issues. Alongside his position as Chairman of the Committee on Small Businesses and Entrepreneurship, he is also a majority member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Shelly Moore Capito (R-WV)

Moore is the first female U.S. Senator for West Virginia. After serving in the House of Representatives for fourteen years, Moore Capito was elected to the Senate in 2014, becoming the first Republican to win a full term in

⁴ "About", [rubio.senate.gov](https://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/biography) Accessed January 27, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20180113191753/https://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/biography>

the Senate from West Virginia since 1942. A believer in bipartisanship, Moore Capito currently serves on the Appropriations Committee, the Environment and Public Works Committee, the Rules and Administration Committee, and the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, as well as the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.⁵

Lamar Alexander (R-TN)

Alexander is the senior Senator for Tennessee and is the only person in the state's history to have served both as Governor and U.S. Senator.⁶ Serving as Governor from 1979 to 1987, Alexander has also been the Secretary for Education from 1991 to 1993 and has run for president both in 1996 and 2000. Alexander was elected to the Senate in 2002 and served as Chairman of the Senate Republican Conference from 2007 to 2012. Furthermore, as Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee since 2015, Alexander has been praised for introducing the Every Student Succeeds Act, receiving the first James Madison Award for his work. Other than the aforementioned committee, Lamar currently sits on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee as well as the Appropriations Committee and the Rules and Administration Committee.

⁵ "About", [capito.senate.gov](https://www.capito.senate.gov) Accessed January 28, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170129104242/https://www.capito.senate.gov/about/about-shelley>

⁶ "About" [alexander.senate.gov](https://www.alexander.senate.gov) Accessed January 29, 2019. <https://www.alexander.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/lamar-alexander-bio>



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Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Steve Daines (R-MT)

Daines is the junior Senator from Montana and holds a B.S. in Chemical Engineering from Montana State University.⁷ After working in a management role for Procter and Gamble for thirteen years, he became the VP of RightNow Technologies, a Montana-based start-up focused on cloud computing; the company was acquired by Oracle in 2012 and remains one of Montana's largest employers. Daines was elected to the House of Representatives in 2012 and was ranked most effective first-term House member in 2013 and 2014. Elected to the Senate in 2015, Daines sits on the Senate Committees on Appropriations, Energy and Natural Resources, Indian Affairs, and Commerce.

Bill Cassidy (R-LA)

Cassidy is a former gastroenterologist and senior Senator for Louisiana.⁸ After attending Louisiana State University both as an undergraduate and as a medical student, Cassidy worked in Louisiana's charity hospital system for thirty years. Cassidy was elected to the Louisiana State Senate in 2006 and then to the House of Representatives in 2008. He was elected to the Senate in 2014 and serves on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the Joint Economic Commit-

⁷ "About", *daines.senate.gov* Accessed January 27, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20161229230413/https://www.daines.senate.gov/meet-steve/biography>

⁸ "About", *cassidy.senate.gov* Accessed January 26, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170111214522/https://www.cassidy.senate.gov/about/about-bill>

tee, and the Veteran Affairs Committee.

Democrats (and Independents caucusing with Democrats)

Maria Cantwell (D-WA) - Ranking Member

Cantwell is the junior Senator for the State of Washington and a first-generation college graduate.⁹ She is the state's second female senator. Previously, Cantwell served in the Washington House of Representatives from 1987 to 1993 and in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1993 to 1995. She was first elected Senator in 2000, and currently is a ranking member in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, meaning that she is the most senior member on the committee from the minority party. Cantwell also sits on the Senate Committees on Commerce, Science and Transportation, Indian Affairs, Finance, and Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

Bernie Sanders (I-VT)

Sanders is the junior Senator for Vermont and a formal nominee for the presidential elections of 2016.¹⁰ He has a long history of civic engagement as he participated in many

⁹ "About" *cantwell.senate.gov* Accessed January 24, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170111232957/http://www.cantwell.senate.gov/about/biography/committee-assignments>

¹⁰ "About" *sanders.senate.gov* Accessed January 25, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170123212348/https://berniesanders.com/about/>



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

pro-civil rights protests during the 1960s and was elected mayor of Burlington in 1991 with a margin of 10 votes. Sanders is the longest-serving Independent in history, as he was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1990. He caucuses with the Democrats, which allows him to be appointed to committees and, at times, give Democrats the majority. Sanders focuses on the shrinking middle-class and the growing income gap. He's currently the ranking member for the Senate's Budget Committee, as well as being appointed to the Veterans Affairs Committee, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and the Joint Economic Committee among others.

Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)

Stabenow is the senior Senator for Michigan, the first in the state's history.¹¹ Before getting involved in politics, Stabenow used to work in the public education sector. She was elected on the Ingham County Board of Commissioners when she was just 24, later becoming the Chair of the Board. She served in both the Michigan House of Representatives and the Michigan Senate. She also served in the House of Representatives, and was elected to the Senate in 2000. Stabenow is a ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, as well as as a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources, Finance, and Budget Committees.

¹¹ "About", [stabenow.senate.gov](https://www.stabenow.senate.gov/about/biography) Accessed January 27, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20190107074742/https://www.stabenow.senate.gov/about/biography>

Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV)

Cortez Masto is the senior Senator for Nevada and is very new to Congress, having been elected only in 2017.¹² Before becoming a Senator, she served as Attorney General of Nevada from 2007 to 2015. She is the first woman elected Senator for Nevada and is the first Latina elected to serve in the Senate. Cortez Masto is a member of the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; the Committee on Rules and Administration; the Committee on Indian Affairs; and the Special Committee on Aging.

Tina Smith (D-MN)

Smith is the junior Senator for Minnesota and a member of the Minnesota Democrat-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL).¹³ She was appointed to the job by Vice-President Mike Pence to fill the seat previously held by Al Franken, who resigned amid allegations of sexual harassment and misconduct. Prior to her Senatorial appointment, Smith was a businesswoman, holding an MBA from Dartmouth and working for General Mills. In 2014, she was elected as Minnesota's Lieutenant Governor, position she served until she became Senator. Smith is part of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry,

¹² "About", [cortezmasto.senate.gov](https://www.cortezmasto.senate.gov) Accessed January 25, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170929044950/https://www.cortezmasto.senate.gov/about>

¹³ "About" [smith.senate.gov](https://www.smith.senate.gov/content/about-tina) Accessed January 27, 2019. <https://www.smith.senate.gov/content/about-tina>



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serving as ranking member for the Subcommittee on Rural Development and Energy; the Committee of Energy and Natural Resources; the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions; and the Committee on Indian Affairs.

Angus King (I-ME)

King is the junior Senator for Maine and is the state's first Independent Senator; he chooses to caucus with the Democrats.¹⁴ He previously served as Governor of Maine from 1995 to 2003. King is the co-founder of the Former Governors Caucus as well as the Senate Arctic Caucus. He is a strong believer in bipartisanship, often inviting his colleagues on both sides of the political spectrum to his home for barbeque dinners focused on getting to know each other. Senator King is a member of the Armed Services Committee, the Select Committee on Intelligence, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and the Committee on Rules and Administration.

Joe Manchin (D-WV)

Manchin is the senior Senator for West Virginia and is known for being a moderate Democrat.¹⁵ Manchin previously served as Secretary of State of West Virginia from 2001 to 2005 Governor of West Virginia from 2005 to 2010. Manchin strongly believes in the idea of “retail government” – in other words,

keeping in contact with his constituents and work for their interests. He's more conservative than most Democrats, which allows him to connect to his Republican colleagues more easily. He sits on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and the Appropriations Committee.

¹⁴ “About” [king.senate.gov](https://www.king.senate.gov) Accessed January 28, 2019. <https://www.king.senate.gov/about>

¹⁵ “About” [manchin.senate.gov](https://www.manchin.senate.gov) Accessed January 29, 2019. <https://www.manchin.senate.gov/about>



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BUCS VIII