



Congressman Pedro R. Pierluisi
Statement for the Record
H.Res 5, A Resolution Providing for the House Rules of the 112th Congress
January 5, 2011

Mr./Madame Speaker:

I rise in strong opposition to the Republican rules package, because it sends a message of exclusion and indifference to my constituents and those of my fellow delegates from the other U.S. territories and the District of Columbia.

As the Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico, I represent nearly four million U.S. citizens, far more than any other member of this chamber. Together, the delegates from the other U.S. territories and the District of Columbia represent over one million people. Our constituents are part of the American family. They pledge allegiance to the same flag as their fellow Americans in the 50 states. They fight—and many of them have died—in defense of our nation.

Under a rule in place for the last three Democratic-controlled Congresses, the representatives from the territories and the District were given a single, extremely-circumscribed privilege on the House floor. We were permitted to vote on amendments when the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole, a parliamentary device designed to allow greater participation by Members in debate. The rule provided for an automatic revote to be held in the exceedingly rare

instance where our votes affected the outcome. This rule was upheld by the federal courts and did not impede the work of this House in any way.

This simple privilege promoted responsible and transparent government. By obligating us to take public stands on issues of importance, it enabled our constituents to better evaluate both our governing philosophy and the quality of our representation. The privilege also sent a clear moral message—a message of inclusiveness—conveying to our constituents that their voices counted.

In a move that is as unnecessary as it is unjust, the Republican package will deprive us of this privilege, which may have been small in their eyes, but which held significant meaning for us and those we represent. The Republican package dishonors men and women from the territories and the District of Columbia. And in so doing, it does grave damage to the principles of equality and justice that our constituents, side by side with all of your constituents, fight to defend here at home and in distant lands. This is a true shame.

Thank you Mr./Madame Speaker. I yield back the balance of my time.