



Congressman Pedro R. Pierluisi  
Statement as Prepared for Delivery  
Subcommittee on Rules and Organization  
House Committee on Rules  
Members' Day Hearing on Proposed Changes to the Standing Rules of the House of  
Representatives for the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress  
*September 17, 2014*

Chairman Nugent and Ranking Member McGovern: thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement to the Subcommittee about proposed changes to the standing Rules of the House of Representatives for the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress. I urge you to recommend approval of a rules package that would extend to the delegates from the five U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, Guam, the United States Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands) and the District of Columbia the privilege of being able to file, sign and call up a discharge petition. In October 2013, I introduced a House Resolution for this purpose, H. Res. 374, which is cosponsored by my fellow delegates.

The “discharge rule” is the mechanism designed to allow a bill to come directly to the House floor for consideration, even if the committee of referral does not report it. A bill can come to the floor under this procedure only if a member files a petition, a majority of House members—219 of 435, assuming no seats are vacant—sign that petition, and a member calls up that petition for consideration on the House floor.

The current House Rules restrict the privilege of being able to file, sign and call up a discharge petition to the representatives from the 50 states.

There is no principled or logical basis why the relevant House rule—Clause 2 of Rule XV—should not be amended to enable those of us who represent American citizens residing in a U.S. territory or in the District of Columbia to participate in the discharge process on the same terms as our colleagues elected from the states. For decades, the House Rules have afforded delegates equal voting privileges in the standing committees on which they serve. In the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, the delegates serve on a combined total of nine standing committees. Moreover, four delegates currently serve as ranking members of a subcommittee, and delegates have been appointed to serve on conference committees on numerous occasions. Any vote cast by a delegate at the committee level, whether on an amendment or on a motion to report the bill, can be decisive.

If the delegates can participate in the process to determine whether a bill can reach the House floor through the committee process, the delegates should likewise be able to participate in the House-wide process to move a bill to the floor absent a committee vote. Certainly there is no constitutional impediment to this proposed rule change. Under my proposal, a discharge petition would need to be signed by 221 members (of 441 members) in order for that petition to be offered on the House floor, rather than 218 members (of 435 members).

To date, 10 discharge petitions have been filed in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress proposing to bring legislation directly to the floor. These bills address a range of important issues. For example, discharge petitions have been filed regarding the Benghazi attack, workplace equality for

women, the minimum wage, student loans, unemployment insurance, immigration reform, and federal funding to fight wildfires. These issues affect our constituents, just like they affect your constituents, and so we should be allowed to participate in the discharge process.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Summary of Proposed Rules Change from Congressman Pedro R. Pierluisi of Puerto Rico  
Members' Day Hearing on Proposed Rules Changes for the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress  
September 17, 2014**

Proposes to amend clause 2 of Rule XV (“Business in Order on Special Days”) of the Rules of the House of Representatives to allow Delegates and the Resident Commissioner to file, sign, and call up a motion to discharge.

113TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. RES. 374

Amending the Rules of the House of Representatives to allow Delegates and the Resident Commissioner to file, sign, and call up discharge petitions.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 8, 2013

Mr. PIERLUISI (for himself, Ms. NORTON, Ms. BORDALLO, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, and Mr. SABLAN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Rules

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## RESOLUTION

Amending the Rules of the House of Representatives to allow Delegates and the Resident Commissioner to file, sign, and call up discharge petitions.

1       *Resolved*, That clause 2 of rule XV of the Rules of  
2 the House of Representatives is amended as follows:

3           (1) In paragraph (b), after “Member” each  
4 place it appears insert “, Delegate, or Resident  
5 Commissioner”.

6           (2) In paragraph (c), after “Member” insert “,  
7 Delegate, or Resident Commissioner” and after  
8 “Members” each place it appears insert “, Dele-  
9 gates, or Resident Commissioner”.

1           (3) In the fifth sentence of paragraph (c), after  
2           “a majority of the total membership of the House”,  
3           insert “, plus all Delegates and the Resident Com-  
4           missioner,”.

5           (4) In paragraph (d)(1), after “Member” insert  
6           “, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner”.

7           (5) In paragraph (e)(2), after “Member” insert  
8           “, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner”.

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