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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

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SENATE RESOLUTION

JOYOUSLY CELEBRATING "EMANCIPATION DAY OF PUERTO RICO" ON MARCH 22,  
2021

Introduced By: Senators Mendes, Mack, Bell, Pearson, Euer, Quezada, and DiMario

Date Introduced: March 18, 2021

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1           WHEREAS, Emancipation Day is an official holiday of the Commonwealth of Puerto  
2 Rico, commemorating the abolition of slavery on March 22, 1873, when the Island was still a  
3 colony of Spain. On that day, the Spanish National Assembly banned slavery in Puerto Rico; and

4           WHEREAS, Twenty-five years later, in 1898, American troops defeated Spain in the  
5 Spanish-American War, raised the flag in Puerto Rico, and the United States officially took  
6 control of the former Spanish colony. On March 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson signed the  
7 Jones-Shafroth Act into law, under which Puerto Rico became a United States Territory and  
8 granted statutory citizenship to Puerto Ricans. The Act also created a bill of rights for the  
9 territory, and separated its government into executive, legislative and judicial branches; and

10           WHEREAS, On May 18, 1917, President Wilson signed the Selective Service Act of  
11 1917 into law, and 20,000 Puerto Ricans were eventually drafted to serve during World War I.  
12 Puerto Rican soldiers were sent to guard the Panama Canal which made Puerto Rico a critical part  
13 of the United States war efforts; and

14           WHEREAS, The first Puerto Ricans in Providence arrived in the 1920s and moved into  
15 the surrounding areas to work in the agricultural and manufacturing industries. Rhode Island is  
16 now home to more than 40,000 Puerto Ricans, and Rhode Island served as a place of refuge for  
17 many Puerto Rican friends and family members after Hurricane Maria devastated the Island in  
18 2017; now, therefore be it

19           RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby recognizes the

1 territory of Puerto Rico for its major contributions in science and pharmaceutical development,  
2 which have advanced our nation's ability to reduce our dependence on foreign pharmaceutical  
3 ingredients and be on the cutting edge of pharmaceutical advancement; and be it further

4         RESOLVED, That this Senate hereby joyously celebrates March 22nd, 2021 as  
5 "Emancipation Day of Puerto Rico" and furthermore recognizes Rhode Island's shared history  
6 with the territory of Puerto Rico and its contributions to our country and our State; and be it  
7 further;

8         RESOLVED, This Senate hereby further recognizes that over a century later, the citizens  
9 of Puerto Rico, although Americans by birth, are not fully recognized and honored by being  
10 denied full voting citizenship, because it is not guaranteed by the Constitution, nor are they  
11 represented in our federal government with a voting delegation; and be it further

12         RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
13 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Governor of Puerto Rico, the Honorable  
14 Pedro Pierluisi Urrutia.

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