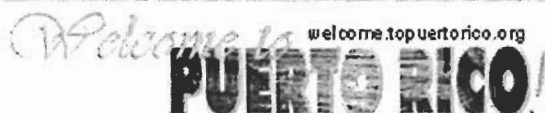


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## Government



Puerto Rico is a self-governing commonwealth in association with the United States. The chief of state is the President of the United States of America. The head of government is an elected Governor. There are two legislative chambers: the House of Representatives, 51 seats, and the Senate, 27 seats.

Puerto Rico has authority over its internal affairs. United States controls: interstate trade, foreign relations and commerce, customs administration, control of air, land and sea, immigration and emigration, nationality and citizenship, currency, maritime laws, military service, military bases, army, navy and air force, declaration of war, constitutionality of laws, jurisdictions and legal procedures, treaties, radio and television-- communications, agriculture, mining and minerals, highways, postal system; Social Security, and other areas generally controlled by the federal government in the United States. Puerto Rican institutions control internal affairs unless U.S. law is involved, as in matters of public health and pollution. The major differences between Puerto Rico and the 50 states are its local taxation system and exemption from Internal Revenue Code, its lack of voting representation in either house of the U.S. Congress, the ineligibility of Puerto Ricans to vote in presidential elections, and its lack of assignment of some revenues reserved for the states.

### Executive

The Executive Power is exercised by the Governor, who leads a cabinet conformed by 15 ministers. The Governor is elected by statewide elections every four years. The secretary of state succeeds the governor should the latter resign, die, or be removed from office. The governor, with the consent of the legislature, appoints the heads of the commonwealth's executive departments.

### Legislature

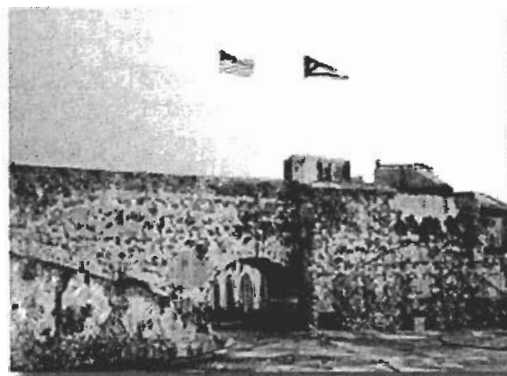
The Legislative Power resides in the Senate and in the Chamber of Representatives. The Senate consists of 27 members, 2 per electoral district, and 11 elected according to the different districts proportion of population. Two extra seats are granted in each house to the opposition if necessary to limit any party's control to two thirds.

The Chamber of Representatives consists of 53 members, one per electoral district and 11 elected proportionally. Legislators are popularly elected to four-year terms. The bicameral legislature determines how to spend the island's tax revenue. Unless specifically stated, Puerto Rico is also subject to all laws and most regulations of the U.S. government, which sometimes cause jurisdictional problems. Most U.S. agencies are represented on the island.

### Judiciary

The Judicial System is directed by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is formed by 7 judges (a chief justice and six associate justices) named by the Governor. The structure of the Judicial System includes a Court of Appeals, Superior Court, a District Court (civil & criminal), and Municipal Court. There are 12 judicial districts.

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico also has a district court comparable to those of the states of US. Each district court has at least one district judge and can have more than a score of district judges, as well as a clerk, a United States Attorney, a United States Marshall, one or more United States Magistrates, bankruptcy judges, probation officers, court



reporters, and their staffs.



The federal government, located in San Juan, is represented by 2 district judges and the procurator, who is named by the President of the United States. The Federal Court has final authority of the ELA.

#### Local Government

Puerto Rico is not divided into counties but has 78 "*municipios*" (municipalities). Each is governed by a popularly elected mayor and municipal assembly. The mayor appoints a secretary-auditor and a treasurer.

Puerto Rico has one resident commissioner (with voice, but no vote) in the Congress of United States. There are no electoral votes for Puerto Rico in the U.S. presidential elections.

The major political parties are: Popular Democratic Party (PPD) 787-725-1992, which supports an enhanced commonwealth status. The New Progressive Party (PNP) 787-721-1992, which supports full U.S. statehood for the island. And the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) 787-782-1455 which supports the independence from the US.



#### Interesting Fact

Partido Popular Democratico (PPD) followers are known as "*los populares*", identified by color red. Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP) followers are known as "*los penepes*", identified by color blue. Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño (PIP) followers are known as "*los pipiolos*", identified by color green.

Other political groups are: Armed Forces for National Liberation (FALN); Volunteers of the Puerto Rican Revolution; Boricua Popular Army (also known as the Macheteros); and, Armed Forces of Popular Resistance.

#### Interesting Fact

On June 4, 1951, Puerto Rican voters approved in a referendum a U.S. law that granted them the right to draft their own constitution. The constituent assembly began its deliberations in the following September. In March 1952 the electorate approved the new constitution, and on July 25 Governor Muñoz proclaimed the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

#### Official Name:

Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. (Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico).

**Interesting Fact**

Puerto Rico was originally named "San Juan Bautista"; San Juan is now the name of the capital city.



Digraph: PR/QR

**Type:**

Commonwealth **glos.** associated with the US. The island's inhabitants possess all the rights and obligations of United States citizens such as paying Social Security, receiving federal welfare and serving in the armed forces, except for the right to vote in presidential elections and the obligation to pay federal taxes.

**Interesting Fact**

The term "United States" when used in a geographical sense on official documents, acts and/or laws; includes the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa.

The U.S. has twelve unincorporated territories, also known as possessions, and two commonwealths. The major possessions are American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. All of these have a non-voting representative in the U.S. Congress. The major commonwealths are Puerto Rico and the Northern Marianas. Commonwealths have their own constitutions and greater autonomy than possessions, and Guam is currently in the process of moving from the status of unincorporated territory to commonwealth. The residents of all of these places are full U.S. citizens, with the exception of those on American Samoa who are U.S. nationals, but not citizens.

U.S. Commonwealths/Territories include: American Samoa (AS), Baker Island\*, Howland Island\*, Guam (GU), Jarvis Island\*, Johnston Atoll\*, Kingman Reef\*, Midway Islands, Navassa Island\*, Northern Mariana Islands (MP), Palau (PW), Palmyra Atoll\*, Puerto Rico (PR), U.S. Virgin Islands (St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas) (VI), and Wake Island\*.

Puerto Rico has its own Olympic team and competes in the Miss Universe pageant as an independent nation.

\* Uninhabited

**Flag:**

Five equal horizontal bands of red (top and bottom) alternating with white; a blue isosceles triangle based on the hoist side bears a large white five-pointed star in the center; design based on the Cuban flag.

**Chief of State:** President of the United States.

**Head of Government:** Governor, elected by the voters to a four-year term.

**Government Officials:**

President	George Bush
Vice President	Dick Cheney
Governor	Aníbal Acevedo Vilá

**Government Form:** Republican; executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

**Ruling Party:** Popular Democratic Party (PDP)

**Percentage of votes cast in last election:** (2004)

Popular Democratic Party (PDP): 48.4%  
New Progressive Party (NPP): 48.2%  
Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP): 2.7%  
Other: 0.5%

**Registered:** 2,440,131  
Voters: 1,994,269  
Turnout: 81.7% (2004)

**House of Representatives Seats:** (51 members)  
Popular Democratic Party: 18 Seats  
New Progressive Party: 32 Seats  
Puerto Rican Independence Party: 1 Seat (2004)

**Senate:** (27 members)  
Popular Democratic Party: 9 Seats  
New Progressive Party: 17 Seats  
Puerto Rican Independence Party: 1 Seat (2004)

**Constitution :** ratified 3 March 1952; approved by U.S. Congress 3 July 1952; effective 25 July 1952.

**Suffrage:** 18 years of age; universal.

**Voter Participation:** 81.7% (2004)  
Puerto Rico is considered one of the highest records of voter participation in election processes in the world.

#### **Interesting Fact**

During election year, automobile caravans are among the activities planned for political mobilization and propaganda. People gather in town squares to show their support for candidates and parade through the cities to encourage others to vote.

**Electoral Commission:** "Comisión Estatal de Elecciones" 787-724-4979.

**Fiscal Year:** 1 July - 30 June

**Legal System:**  
Puerto Rican civil and commercial codes are fashioned after Spanish models; penal, procedural, and public (including constitutional) law are fashioned after U.S. models.

**Member of:**  
CARICOM (observer), ECLAC (associate), FAO (associate), ICFTU, INTERPOL (sub -bureau), IOC, WCL, WFTU, WHO (associate), WTO (associate).

**U.S. diplomatic representation:** none (commonwealth associated with the US).

**International disputes:** None.

#### **Defense Forces:**

Military: Total active duty personnel (1992) 3,518 U.S personnel.  
Branches: paramilitary National Guard, Police Force.  
Manpower availability: males age 15-49 830,133; fit for military service NA (1993 est.)  
Bases: 5 (Fort Buchanan, Roosevelt Roads Naval Station, Camp Santiago Puerto Rico National Guard, Fort Allen Puerto Rico National Guard, and Borinquen Air Station).  
Note: defense is the responsibility of the US.

**Interesting Facts:**

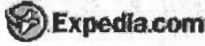
United States has always considered Puerto Rico a strategically advantageous military position in the Caribbean, even before invading the island in 1898. Puerto Rico's position gives to the U.S. military access to North, Central, and South America, as well as a prime location from which to defend U.S. interests in the region. Puerto Rico has become a crucial center for U.S. military surveillance, weapons testing, and training.

With the closure of U.S. bases in Panama after the canal was transferred on Dec. 31, 1999 (Carter-Torrijos Treaty of 1976), Puerto Rico has become home to the highest concentration of U.S. military forces in Latin America. Several components of the U.S. Southern Command (USSouthcom), responsible for U.S. military activity in Latin America and the Caribbean, and United States Army South (USARSO), have relocated to Puerto Rico.

**Other Resources**

- [Comisión Estatal de Elecciones de Puerto Rico](#)
- [Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño - PIP](#)
- [Partido Nuevo Progresista - PNP](#)
- [Preguntas Frecuentes Sobre la Independencia.](#)
- [Puerto Rican Cultural Differences in Politics](#)
- [Puerto Rico \(U.S.\)](#)
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