

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Republican Congressman Advocates for Puerto Rico Statehood

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ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Alaska Republican Rep. Don Young has advocated for Puerto Rico statehood, a decision that defies fellow party members across the country and state.

Young said on Wednesday that the island's statehood was long overdue.

"I think it's time," Young said. "As far as the plebiscites, we've had three of them. Each time we've actually been victorious, in the sense of being a state."

The most recent plebiscite, or non-binding vote, on the island was in November. More than 52% of Puerto Ricans voted for statehood. But statehood requires congressional approval in order to happen.

Puerto Rico statehood scares many Republicans, who have said that it could ensure Democratic leadership in the Senate for decades, Alaska Public Media [reported](#).

Rep. Young said the partisan voting patterns of Puerto Rico's electorate should not determine whether the island qualifies for statehood. Young referred to the fights by Alaska and Hawaii for statehood, which occurred in 1959. He said Alaska was predicted to send almost exclusively Democratic representatives to Congress while Hawaii was expected to send all Republicans.

"I have some opposition on my side about, 'they'll all be Democrats.' They said the same thing about Alaska and now we're all Republicans," Young said. "So, everybody has the right to decide what they're going to be, but don't pre-think what they're going to be because it doesn't work out that way."

In the last few decades, Alaska has mostly sent Republicans to Washington while Hawaii has mostly sent Democrats.

Young had sponsored the only Puerto Rico statehood bill to ever pass the U.S. House in 1998.

"I'm proud of that," Young said.

Fourteen other House Republicans had joined him as sponsors of the most current Puerto Rico statehood bill.