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Resolution to Condemn Double Standard Against U.S. Territories to be Heard in First Ever Congressional Insular Cases Hearing

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Congress on Wednesday will hold an historic, first-ever congressional hearing focused exclusively on the Insular Cases, a series of Supreme Court cases grounded in racial discrimination that established a doctrine of "separate and unequal" for residents of U.S. territories, Equally American, which advocates for equality and civil rights for the 3.5 million American citizens living in U.S. territories, announced Tuesday.

The hearing will start at 1 p.m. EDT, with the House Natural Resources Committee considering House Resolution 279, which seeks to condemn the Insular Cases as both contrary to the Constitution and for their racist underpinnings. Equally American's President, Neil Weare, is among the witnesses who have been invited to testify.

"I applaud Chair Grijalva for holding this historic hearing, and I look forward to testifying in support of this bipartisan resolution," Mr. Weare stated. "This resolution is an important step towards turning the page on the Insular Cases and the colonial framework they established."

The House Resources Committee released the following statements from co-sponsors of H.Res. 279:

"The Insular Cases belong to a very dark chapter of U.S. History when the Doctrines of 'separate but equal' and attitudes about racial inferiority explicitly defined the country's laws," said Natural Resources Committee Chair Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ). "We cannot erase this harmful past, but as legislators, we have an obligation to ensure that its legacy does not extend into the future," he added.

"The Insular Cases, decided in 1901 by the same Supreme Court that upheld segregation laws, have no place in modern day America," Congressman Gregorio Kilili Sablan (D-NMI) said. "In these cases, the Supreme Court calls people living in U.S. territories 'alien' and 'savage and restless people,' antiquated notions of racial inferiority that should not be the basis of any contemporary court decisions. Our resolution recognizes these racist and imperialist assumptions for what they are. It rejects the Insular Cases and affirms the importance of equal rights for Americans everywhere, even in the U.S. insular areas."

"The Insular Cases go well beyond the ability of citizens in the territories to vote," Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett (D-VI) said. "We pay billions of dollars in federal taxes, and yet, residents of U.S. territories are denied access to critical federal programs and support. Otherwise eligible citizens in the territories are denied Supplemental Security Income (SSI), leaving our most vulnerable seniors and disabled people to fend for themselves. Federal programs, including Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Child Tax Credit, and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), are either capped or denied altogether. This discrimination against residents of the Territories must end now."

"These last vestiges of blatant racism in governance and interpretation of the law, used today to validate the unequal treatment of Americans in Territories, are staring us in the face, daring us to bring them down," Congressman Michael San Nicolas (D-GU) said. "The question of our time is: will we blink?"

The Hearing will include two panels of distinguished experts:

Panel 1: Members of Congress

Rep. Stacey E. Plaskett (D-VI)

Panel 2: Invited Witnesses

Dr. Daniel Immerwahr, Professor, Department of History, Northwestern University

Mr. Neil Weare, President, Equally American

Hon. Tina Muña Barnes, Vice Speaker, Guam Legislature

Prof. Rose Cuison-Villazor, Professor of Law and Chancellor's Social Justice Scholar, Rutgers University

Dr. Peter S. Watson, President & CEO, the Dwight Group, LLC & Former White House Director of Asian Affairs, National Security Council

Hon. Talauega Eleasalo Va'alele Ale, Lieutenant Governor, American Samoa

The House Natural Resources Committee will meet virtually at 1 PM EDT, with the proceedings livestreamed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZYBMHLn1mM and <https://www.facebook.com/NRDems/posts/5555995237808240>.

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