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Bloomberg Supports Statehood for Puerto Rico, Says Nothing About the USVI

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Michael Bloomberg By. THE NEW YORK TIMES

Democratic Presidential Candidate Michael Bloomberg on Monday unveiled a plan that would see Puerto Rico receiving statehood under his presidency — a move that boldly defers from his Democratic rivals, many of whom have tiptoed around the topic.

“For decades, Puerto Ricans and their interests have been ignored by Washington. And there’s a simple reason why: They don’t have a vote in Congress,” Mr. Bloomberg said in a statement. “There’s a clear solution to this challenge that a majority of Puerto Ricans support. Most presidential candidates for president have been too afraid to back it. Not me. I’ll state it clearly: I support statehood for Puerto Rico. And as president, I will work to pass a bill making it a reality,

subject to approval by the people of Puerto Rico — who will make the ultimate decision.”

Democratic candidates such as Elizabeth Warren and even liberal Bernie Sanders believe Puerto Ricans should first vote for statehood at the ballot box. Presidential candidates Andrew Yang and former Maryland Rep. John Delaney also support statehood for PR.

The Bloomberg plan calls for an independent audit of the island's current debt and restructuring plans. As it stands, Puerto Rico's debt restructuring is overseen by a federally-imposed fiscal control board, which is tasked with managing the island's debt crisis. Some Democrats in Congress believe the board's actions to reduce the island's debt burden has been hurting disaster recovery.

“Puerto Rico continues to be burdened by a federally-controlled debt restructuring process that has imposed draconian cuts to pensions, civil service pay, the university and municipal governments that are the backbone of public safety and disaster response,” Mr. Bloomberg’s campaign said in a statement. “Mike’s plan provides for an independent audit, overseen by a representative board, of current debt and recent restructuring proposals, and implements a plan for debt relief based on the results.”

The multibillionaire said he would increase federal assistance to Puerto Rico by fully funding Medicaid and implementing federal tax credits that do not go to Puerto Ricans because the vast majority do not pay federal income taxes.

The plan would provide "the same safety net funding to PR as any other U.S. state,” his campaign said.

There was no mention of the U.S. Virgin Islands in Mr. Bloomberg's plan. The Bloomberg campaign [announced](#) in December that it would open an office in the USVI, seeking to nab the territory's 13 delegates.

In many instances, however, policy announced for Puerto Rico are sometimes meant for the island commonwealth and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Mr. Bloomberg is well-known in the territory, especially following Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, when Bloomberg Philanthropies aided in hurricane recovery with millions of dollars.