

## Mainland, PR Statehood Groups Join With American Conservative Union For Roundtable

Representatives from Puerto Rico Statehood organizations and pro-statehood officials from Puerto Rico and the mainland United States met with Mr. David A. Keene and Mr. William Lauderback, Chair and Vice Chair respectively, of the American Conservative Union (ACU) in Washington, D.C. Friday May 4, 2007 for a roundtable discussion of issues relating to Puerto Rico Statehood.



Foreground from left. Rafael Rodriguez, July 4th 1899 Foundation/CPREA; Mr. David A. Keene, Chair, The American Conservative Union; Mr. William Lauderback, Vice Chair, The American Conservative Union. Rocio Velez, Chair, Americans for Puerto Rico Statehood; Senator Roberto Arango, Puerto Rico Senate; Antonio Monroig, Chair, The United States Council for Puerto Rico Statehood; Luis Baco, Office of U.S. Rep. Luis Fortuño (PR). Not in picture - Dr. Carlos Chardon, Sec. Puerto Rico Republican Party.

Participants included Rafael Rodriguez, founder of the July 4th, 1899 Foundation/Center for Puerto Rico Equality and Advancement; Antonio Monroig, Chair of the U.S. Council for Puerto Rico Statehood, Dr. Carlos Chardon, Secretary of the Republican Party in Puerto Rico; Rocio Velez, President of Americans for Puerto Rico Statehood, Puerto Rico State Senator Roberto Arango (San Juan - PR) and Luis Baco - Office of Rep. Luis Fortuño, U.S. House of Representatives. The ACU is the country's oldest and largest grassroots conservative lobbying organization. Mr. Keene has chaired the group since 1984.

The attendees discussed the wide variety of issues relating to Statehood including opportunities and perceived obstacles. The roundtable served as an opportunity to dispel many of the myths and perceptions relating to Statehood for Puerto Rico including those perpetrated by statehood opponents. Participants used the opportunity to clarify issues relating to equity of opportunity and citizenship, democratic rights. Discussion items concerned economic empowerment, entrepreneurship and development, representative democracy, civil rights, education, citizenship and constitutional protections. The attendees found the exchange educational, beneficial and fruitful. Following the meeting Keene expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to learn more about the impact of the many issues on American citizens resulting from territorial status and sharing Statehood concerns.

Council Chair Monroig said "Exchanges like this with important and influential figures and organizations such as David Keene and the ACU are important building blocks in our education and advocacy work towards Statehood for Puerto Rico and equal rights and opportunity for all citizens. It was an excellent opportunity to share our positions and experiences, as well as to join with our pro-Statehood colleagues in this important outreach effort. The exchange was forthright and frank and participants had an opportunity to learn about other perspectives and what arguments about Statehood for Puerto Rico are being ". Other attendees also expressed their pleasure in the opportunity to share their thoughts, experiences and perspectives.

The roundtable was developed collaboratively by the U.S. Council for Puerto Rico Statehood with the July 4th, 1899 Foundation/Center for Puerto Rico Equality & Advancement.