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**Center for Puerto Rico Equality & Advancement President response  
to the misinformed claims of Mark Krikorian**

Mark Krikorian demonstrated that he doesn't understand Puerto Rico in his Nov. 21 blog post "Playing Both Sides". Its focus was an incorrect presumption that leaders of the territory's statehood party are conspiring to have some members become Republicans and others Democrats to cover both sides in the islands' national government (the U.S. Government).

The simple truth that escaped him is that citizens in the territory who want equal rights and responsibilities in the United States self-identify with the Republican or Democratic Parties out of conviction, just as citizens in the States and the District of Columbia do.

His misunderstanding was surprising since he recognized that Governor Luis Fortuño is a Member of the Republican National Committee who had a "conservative voting record" while in Congress and has pushed through "free market reforms" as governor.

In addition, Fortuño is just one of the Puerto Rico statehood party leaders who have been active Republicans in national politics. Other prominent Puerto Rico Republicans include House Speaker Jenniffer Gonzalez, Senate President Thomas Rivera Schatz, San Juan Mayor Jorge Santini, and many other territorial legislators and mayors.

An admitted advocate of independence for Puerto Rico, Krikorian views (really, misunderstands) Puerto Ricans as "foreign." But, in fact, Puerto Ricans have been U.S. citizens since 1917 with an outstanding record of service in the U.S. military since then and live in islands that have been U.S. territory since 1898. They are just as American as other U.S. citizens -- and more people of Puerto Rican origin now are citizens of States than of the territory. Further, very few people in Puerto Rico want the independence Krikorian wants for the islands.

Puerto Rican statehooders "love their country and take pride in it," as Krikorian wrote, but their country *is* the United States. Their affection for the islands does not detract from their national loyalty any more than the devotion of a Texan to Texas does.