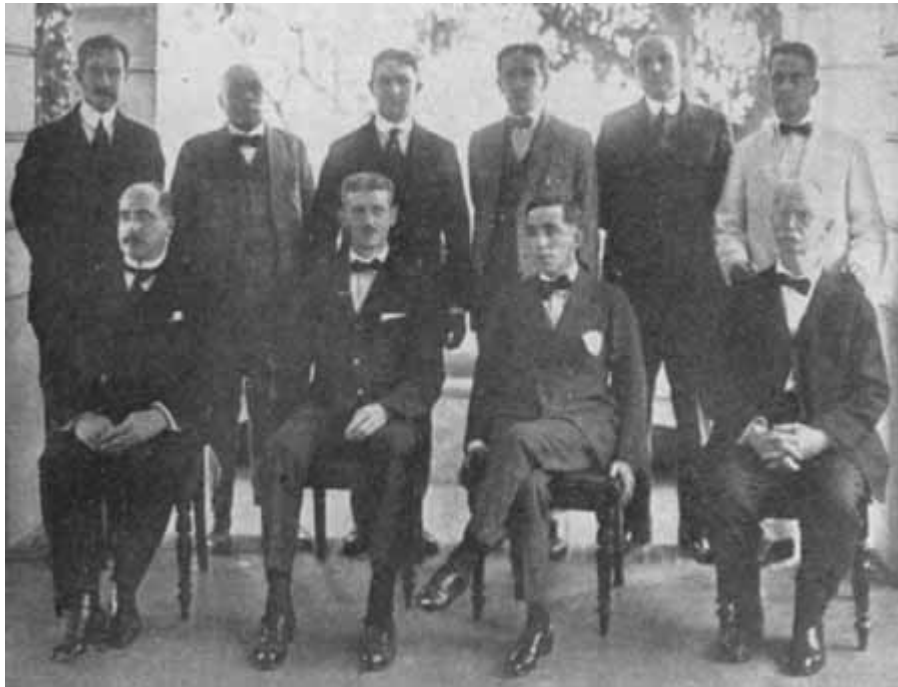


Jones Act

On March 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones-Shafroth Act. This law gave Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship. The Jones Act separated the Executive, Judicial, and Legislative branches of Puerto Rican government, provided civil rights to the individual, and created a locally elected bicameral legislature. The two houses were a Senate consisting of 19 members and a 39-member House of Representatives. However, the Governor and the President of the United States had the power to veto any law passed by the legislature. Also, the United States Congress had the power to stop any action taken by the legislature in Puerto Rico. The U.S. maintained control over fiscal and economic matters and exercised authority over mail services, immigration, defense and other basic governmental matters.

First administrative cabinet under the Jones Act. From left: A. Ruíz Soler (Health), José E. Benedicto (Treasurer), Ramón Siaca Pacheco (Secretary), Hon. Arthur Yager (Governor, 1914-1921), Paul G. Miller (Education), Manuel Camuñas (Labor and Agriculture), Salvador Mestre (Attorney General), Guillermo Esteves (Interior), Jesse W. Bonner (Auditor), Pedro L. Rodríguez (Governor's Secretary).

[Miller](#), p. 418.



<http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/jonesact.html>

Jones–Shafroth Act

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Jones–Shafroth Act** (1917) was a 1917 [Act](#) of the [United States Congress](#) by which [Puerto Ricans](#) were collectively made [U.S. citizens](#), the people of [Puerto Rico](#) were empowered to have a popularly-elected [Senate](#), established a [bill of rights](#), and authorized the election of a [Resident Commissioner](#) to a four year term. Also known as the "Jones Act of Puerto Rico" or "Jones Law of Puerto Rico", it amended the "Organic Act of Puerto Rico" created by the [Foraker Act](#) of 1900. (This "Jones Act" applies only to [Puerto Rico](#).) The act was signed into law by President [Woodrow Wilson](#) on March 2, 1917.

Impetus

The impetus for this legislation came from a complex of both local and mainland interests. Puerto Ricans lacked internationally recognized citizenship; but the local council was wary of "imposing citizenship." [Luis Muñoz Rivera](#), the [Resident Commissioner](#) in Washington, argued in its favor, giving several significant speeches in the House of Representatives.^[1] On 5 May 1916 he demanded: "Give us now the field of experiment which we ask of you. . . . It is easy for us to set up a stable republican government with all possible guarantees for all possible interests. And afterwards, when you . . . give us our independence . . . you will stand before humanity as a great creator of new nationalities and a great liberator of oppressed people."

Major features

The Act made all citizens of Puerto Rico U.S. citizens collectively^[2] via the [Jones Act](#) and revised the system of [government in Puerto Rico](#). In some respects, the governmental structure paralleled that of a state of the United States. Powers were separated among an [Executive](#), [Judicial](#), and [Legislative branch](#). The law also recognized certain [civil rights](#) through a [bill of rights](#) to be observed by the government of Puerto Rico (although [trial by jury](#), which did not exist in Puerto Rico's [civil law](#) system, was not among them).

Citizenship

Conscription

It allowed [conscription](#) to be extended to the island, which sent 20,000 soldiers to the [U.S. Army](#) during the war. Before the Act was signed, Puerto Ricans residents of the island who were not citizens of the United States (their citizenship since 1898 was Puerto Rican) were considered as aliens. But then [Isabel Gonzalez](#) arrived in New York from Puerto Rico. US Immigration attempted to deport her back to Puerto Rico, but she appealed her case up to the Supreme Court (see: [Gonzales v. Williams](#)), and won immigration rights for all Puerto Ricans from that point forward. However, the Court fell just short of granting US Citizenship status. As such Puerto Ricans were ineligible for the draft. Prior to the Act, Puerto Ricans in the mainland United States who were permanent residents were required to register with the Selective Service System and could be drafted.^{[3][4]}

The Act created a legislative system comprising two houses: a [Senate](#) consisting of 19 members and a 39-member [House of Representatives](#). All were elected by [manhood suffrage](#) for a term of four years. Acts of the Legislature could be vetoed by the governor, but his veto could be overridden by a two-thirds vote, in which case the [President of the United States](#) would make the final decision.

Matters relating to franchises and concessions were vested in a Public Service Commission consisting of the heads of the executive departments, the auditor, and two elected commissioners. A [Resident Commissioner](#) to the United States continued to be elected by popular vote for a four-year term; the Resident Commissioner's duties included representing Puerto Rico in the [U.S. House of Representatives](#), with a voice but without vote, as well as before the executive departments in [Washington](#).

Executive Branch

Six executive departments were constituted: Justice, Finance, Interior, Education, Agriculture, Labour and Health. The governor, the attorney-general and the commissioner of education were appointed by the President with the approval of the U.S. Senate; the heads of the remaining departments by the governor of Puerto Rico, subject to the approval of the Puerto Rican Senate.

The [Governor of Puerto Rico](#) was to be appointed by the [President of the United States](#), and not elected. All cabinet officials had to be approved by the [United States Senate](#), and the [United States Congress](#) had the power to veto any law passed by the [Puerto Rican Legislature](#). Washington maintained control over fiscal and economic matters and exercised authority over mail services, immigration, defense and other basic governmental matters. Puerto Rico was not given electoral votes in the election of President, because the U.S. constitution allowed only full-fledged states to have electoral votes.

Subsequent legislation

Portions of the Jones Act were superseded in 1948, after which the Governor was popularly elected. In 1948, U.S. Congress allowed Puerto Rico to draft its own [Constitution](#) which, when implemented in 1952, provided greater autonomy as a Commonwealth (according to the political sector in power in the island at the time).

References

1. [^] [Munoz Rivera, Luis \(17 July 1859-15 Nov. 1916\)](#)
2. [^] [The Louisiana Purchase and American Expansion: 1803-1898. By Sanford Levinson and Bartholomew H. Sparrow. New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. 2005. Page 166, 178.]"U.S. citizenship was extended to residents of Puerto Rico by virtue of the Jones Act, chap. 190, 39 Stat. 951 (1971) (codified at 48 U.S.C. § 731 (1987))"
3. [^] ["Can Non-Citizens Join the Military?" By Jeremy Derfner](#)
4. [^] Jose Cabranes, *Citizenship and the American Empire* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 14-17.