

FISCAL CRISIS PART 2

Vieques history is clear about one thing: we have been treated poorly by each and every ruling authority under which we have been governed. Our services and infrastructure are horrible by standards of the developed world:

- schools
- healthcare
- security
- justice system
- transportation (access to Isla Grande)

And, we are helpless to make any substantial improvements. Our fates are almost completely determined by outsiders who have placed their many priorities ahead of ours. Now, our situation is about to become even worse.

The financial disaster created by our self-serving, corrupt, and incompetent leaders is going to result in even more devastating conditions for our island. We already see:

- reduced services
 - medical: X-ray, birthing facility
 - public works: garbage collection, road repair
- reduced access to Isla Grande from the severely compromised ferry system
- reduced payments to the municipality resulting in layoffs
- unpaid employees & contractors
 - medical: 5 months behind in Vieques vs. 2 months on the Big Island
 - school bus drivers: 4 months behind
- the threat of reductions to every service offered by the government
- private citizen and business banking accounts looted by the Puerto Rico Treasury without a scintilla of due process and using the most transparent of excuses
- **an effort to take away the little autonomy we do have by reducing the 78 PR municipalities to 8 and eliminating the municipality of Vieques.**

Furthermore, the US Congress is considering reducing transfer payments. Programs deemed to foster dependency rather than work or employment (most of our welfare system), are going to be restructured. More protests, strikes, and unrest will certainly follow, and expanded controversy regarding our colonial status will likely become unnerving.

We just received our “first shot across the bow”, our warning of what is to come. A congressional call to sell Fish and Wildlife property to developers (the money going to San Juan) was made to raise cash. While we will mobilize to prevent this from happening, it is only the beginning. Many more attempts to cut off limbs to save the body will be offered. Sacrifices must be made during a crisis, and some things (people, places and things) are expendable.

What group do you think San Juan has in mind to sacrifice first? What group is the tail of the dog? Who threw out the Navy? What group IS NOT politically connected in either Puerto Rico or the US? Which municipality is so accustomed to being dumped upon that they will yell and scream but ultimately roll over and play dead? Sadly, we are so low on the priority list that Vieques will be one of the first to be sold to the highest bidder.

Soon there will be some form of a financial control board and/or bankruptcy court instituted to implement strict fiscal policy. Either way, a big part of the applicable authority's responsibility will be to sell government assets and privatize under-performing operations. Government "businesses" like PREPA (electric company) and the ATM are prime examples of the disastrous results of political control of commercial ventures. Such types of entities will be the first to be considered. Next, facilities, buildings and LAND will be appraised, and much will be sold.

PR holds title to thousands of acres of land in Vieques. How will this land be sold, and to whom, and for how much? Where will those funds go? How will the land be used? Will the zoning be changed to maximize the sale value? Will this be in any way good for Vieques? We may not know the specifics, but we all know that this will be horrible for the island. We also know that we will have NO SAY IN THE SALE OF VIEQUES ASSETS. The attacks on our property and our island will be relentless. Deals will be cut before we know it, and protesting will be too little too late. Promises will be made and then broken.

What should we be doing to protect the island from the invasion of the Repo Man? Our PR government is worse than helpless – they are going to throw us under the bus.