

# **The Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics** **continues to weaken** <sup>[1]</sup>

Submitted by [Zulmarie Perez Horta](#) <sup>[2]</sup> on 12 March 2019 - 10:50am



<sup>[2]</sup>



*Dear members of the scientific community and friends of Puerto Rico,*

*We want to draw your attention and invite you to take action on an urgent public policy issue: the continued weakening of the governance of the Puerto Rican Institute of Statistics (PRIS). We invite you to sign and share the petition below.*

**SIGN THE PETITION!** <sup>[3]</sup>

**Are you signing on behalf of a professional organization or scientific society? Click [HERE](#)**

<sup>[4]</sup>.

*-The Puerto Rico Science Policy Action Network (PR-SPAN) and the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS)*

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**We demand strong governance for an independent and autonomous Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics**

During the past two years, the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics (PRIS) has faced a series of threats that have undermined its autonomy, credibility, and reputation. From 2017 to date, the administration of the Hon. Dr. Ricardo Rosselló Nevares has illegally removed members from the Board of Directors [5], tried to dismantle the Institute [6] and outsource its functions, and made appointments to the Board that have been questioned [7] by the international scientific community. In January 2019, there were allegations about the politicization [8] of the Board of Directors and their ability to act independently and free of partisan influences. As of February 10, 2019 the role of executive director of the Institute has been vacant, after the resignation of Dr. Mario Marazzi Santiago [9], who had served in this role since 2007.

These events not only cast doubt on the future of the Institute of Statistics, but also create serious concerns about the capacity of the Puerto Rican government and society to make decisions and create public policies informed by scientific evidence and by statistics that are timely, reliable, and of high-quality.

Therefore, we ask the Government of Puerto Rico and the Board of Directors of the Institute of Statistics to take the following actions to strengthen the governance, independence and autonomy of the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics:

- **Maintain the powers and faculties of the Executive Director to protect the independence of PRIS:** Any future amendments made to the organic law of the Institute should seek to strengthen the governance and independence of the agency, but without weakening the powers and faculties of the Executive Director, and without granting more power to the Board of Directors or the Governor.
- **Dissociate the Governor and Puerto Rico Senate from the process of nominating and confirming members to the PRIS Board of Directors:** Currently, the members of the PRIS Board of Directors are nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the Puerto Rico Senate. To avoid the possibility of partisan influence, we ask that the nomination and confirmation process to the Board of Directors of the Statistics Institute be dissociated from the government in turn (similar to the nomination process for the Board of Trustees of the Puerto Rico Science Trust) [10].
- **Strengthen the PRIS Board as an independent, objective body of experts:** We ask that candidates to the PRIS Board of Directors (1) are nominated by scientific associations or professional and industrial groups that represent the relevant fields of specialization; (2) are experts with integrity, personal and professional objectivity, demonstrated expertise, and advanced academic preparation (a master's or doctoral degree [11]) in the use of statistics, economics or planning; (3) do not have direct connections to the current or previous government administrations (i.e. not having held elective public office during at least five (5) years prior to their appointment; not having participated, collaborated or made political or financial contributions to political candidates or campaigns, as suggested in Article 2 of P. de la C. 4409 from May 12, 2008 [12], presented by the Representative and now Resident Commissioner Hon. Jennifer González-Colón).

- **The search and appointment of the next Executive Director is done transparently and in consultation with the Puerto Rican and international scientific community:** The scientific community has demonstrated time and again its commitment to the autonomy of the PRIS and government transparency in Puerto Rico. Therefore, the members of PR-SPAN and UCS, and members of the Puerto Rican and international scientific community are willing to actively participate in the nomination, search and selection process for the next Executive Director of the PRIS. It is of the utmost importance that the Executive Director has the relevant expertise, and is committed to the independence and autonomy of the Institute, and to keeping it free from partisan influences.

We urge the scientific community and friends of Puerto Rico to join this petition and continue advocating for the autonomy, independence, reputation and credibility of the Puerto Rican Institute of Statistics. *For more details contact the Puerto Rico Science Policy Action Network (PR-SPAN) at [prspan@cienciapr.org](mailto:prspan@cienciapr.org)* <sup>[13]</sup>.

### **SIGN THE PETITION!** <sup>[3]</sup>

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