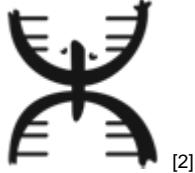


Increasing Concerns About Appointments to the Board of Directors of the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics [1]

Submitted by [Carlos De Leon](#) [2] on 10 January 2019 - 7:20pm



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The Puerto Rico Science Policy Action Network (PR-SPAN) and CienciaPR, the largest network of Puerto Rican scientists in the world, is echoing the concerns expressed by the American Statistical Association and the Association of Economists of Puerto Rico about recent appointments to the Board of Directors of the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics and how these threaten the autonomy and integrity of the agency.

Recently, Dr. Ron Wasserstein, executive director of the American Statistical Association (ASA), the largest and most prestigious statistical community in the world, sent a letter ^[3] to Mr. Arnaldo Cruz (President of the Board of Directors of the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics, PRIS) expressing serious concerns about the recent appointments made by Governor Ricardo Rosselló to the PRIS Board of Directors ^[4]. In the letter, Wasserstein explained that ASA is deeply concerned because the appointments do not appear to adhere to PRIS' organic law and thus undermine the function and independence of PRIS.

On November 28, 2018, Governor Ricardo Rosselló appointed ^[5] economist Nicolás Muñoz, certified public accountant (CPA) Harry Santiago and Secretary of Economic Development Manuel Laboy to the Board of Directors of PRIS. The appointments were made because the terms of three of the seven members of the Board had expired. Article 7 of the Puerto Rico Statistics Institute Act ^[6] establishes that the Board of Directors must be composed of seven (7) members, six (6) of them "persons of recognized personal and professional integrity, objectivity and competence in any of the fields of statistics, economics and planning" and one (1) government official to be appointed by the Governor.

However, two of these three appointments do not follow the law of the Institute of Statistics. In the first place, the appointment of Secretary Manuel Laboy exceeds the limit of one government official, since Alex López Echegaray, current member of the Board, is an advisor to the Senate of Puerto Rico and a member of the Board of the Conservatory of Music. On the other hand, CPA Harry Santiago, does not have an academic degree or credentials in the areas established by the law to be a member of the Board of Directors.

The Puerto Rico Science Policy Action Network ^[7] (PR-SPAN) and Ciencia Puerto Rico (CienciaPR) echo the concerns expressed by Dr. Ron Wasserstein, the ASA, the Association of Economists of Puerto Rico (AEPR) and other experts on the legality of recent appointments and how they threaten the autonomy, integrity and independence of the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics. We firmly believe that an autonomous PRIS, free of political influence is necessary for Puerto Rico to have reliable and high quality data and statistics, a road map to address the multiple challenges facing the country, and coherent and evidence-based public policies. Therefore, we encourage the members of our communities to write to Mr. Arnaldo Cruz, President of the Board of Directors of the Institute and/or Hon. Ricardo Rosselló Nevares, asking them to (1) consider the letters sent by the ASA and AEPR, (2) remove the members of the Board who do not meet the requirements of expertise, (3) remove one of the two government representatives from the Board, and (4) establish transparent, participatory and impartial processes to nominate future members of the PRIS Board and, if necessary, leaders within the staff of the Institute.

Arnaldo Cruz

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- [Instituto de Estadísticas de Puerto Rico](#) [10]
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Links

- [1] <https://www.cienciapr.org/en/blogs/pr-span/concerns-appointments-board-pris> [2]
- <https://www.cienciapr.org/en/user/carlosmdeleon> [3] https://www.amstat.org/asa/files/pdfs/POL-PRIS_BoardJanurary2019.pdf [4] <https://estadisticas.pr/en/sobre-nosotros/junta-de-directores> [5]
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