

NPRC URGES THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION TO TREAT THE U.S. CITIZENS OF VIEQUES WITH RESPECT

Government 2011-12-10 04:23:37

Washington, DC – The National Puerto Rican Coalition Inc. (NPRC) today demanded the Obama Administration to reevaluate their position and treat the Americans living in Vieques with respect.

“The preliminary report released yesterday by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR,) which accepted local claims that there is a higher incidence of cancer and other illnesses on Vieques compared with neighboring Puerto Rico, but said there is no proof the problem is linked to U.S. military activity, is a disservice to the American citizens of Vieques, a small island off the east coast of Puerto Rico,” declared Rafael A. Fantauzzi, President & CEO of the National Puerto Rican Coalition.

“In November 2009, the then-Director of ATSDR, Howard Frumkin, pledged to residents of Vieques and Congress that the agency would re-examine the data as part of a fresh look, however, this preliminary report doesn't provide any additional information,” said Fantauzzi.

“As a result of more than six decades of bombings and due to the toxic environment left by the U.S. Navy, at least four generations of Viequenses have now been exposed to toxins and heavy metals with devastating medical consequences. Numerous scientific studies and the Puerto Rico Department of Health have revealed that the rates of serious illnesses among Viequenses, including cancer, far exceed those on the main island of Puerto Rico,” added Fantauzzi.

“The U.S. citizens of Vieques have paid a huge price defending our national security. The bombings stopped in May 2003, but they continue to suffer from the legacy of decades of bombing and military practices in Vieques. The Department of Defense has the blood of US Citizens in their hands, which in this case is worse than enemy fire,” said Fantauzzi.

“During his campaign, President Obama promised to monitor the health of the people of Vieques and promote adequate remedies to their health conditions. Moreover, the White House Task Force on Puerto Rico acknowledges there is a health crisis in the island municipality. Why does the Obama Administration continue to turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to the plight of the Viequenses?” asked Fantauzzi.

“NPRC would like to recognize the efforts of Congressman Steve Rothman and Resident Commissioner Pedro Pierluisi, who introduced HR 1645, the Vieques Recovery and Development Act, as well as the tireless work of the Mayor of Vieques, Evelyn Delorme. We will continue to fight with you. We urge President Obama to support VRDA and finally bring justice to the people of Vieques,” concluded Fantauzzi.

About NPRC

NPRC's mission is to systematically strengthen and enhance the social, political, and economic well-being of Puerto Ricans throughout the United States and in Puerto Rico with a special focus on the most vulnerable.

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WHEN : 2011-12-10 04:23:37
WHERE :

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