

Resolution 51

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE RELEASE OF OSCAR LÓPEZ RIVERA

WHEREAS, Oscar López Rivera, a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War, returned to the Puerto Rican community of Chicago to become a successful community organizer and help improve conditions in education, housing, and employment;

WHEREAS, in May 1981, he was arrested, along with 14 other men and women, and was convicted of seditious conspiracy and related offenses, yet he nor any of his co-defendants was convicted of harming or killing anyone;

WHEREAS, in 1999, as a result of an international campaign for their release, President Clinton commuted the sentences of most of these men and women. The President offered to commute Oscar's sentence after he served another 10 years in prison. In solidarity with those not included in the commutation, Oscar declined;

WHEREAS, all those released are living productive, law-abiding lives. Oscar is the only one of his co-defendants still behind bars;

WHEREAS, at 70 years old, he is the longest-held political prisoner in the history of Puerto Rico. He has served more time than the South African leader Nelson Mandela;

WHEREAS, there have been many personalities and international organizations which have applied for his release over the past 32 years. That support includes several members of the U.S. House of Representatives, civic and religious leaders

throughout the U.S.; elected officials from New York, California, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Illinois; international figures from Haiti, Mexico and Australia among others; as well as many Puerto Rican and Latino communities throughout the United States;

WHEREAS, in Puerto Rico, several former governors, to include Rafael Hernández Colón, Sila María Calderón, Anibal Acevedo Vilá, and the current governor Alejandro García Padilla, have all requested in writing the immediate release of Oscar López Rivera. Both the current Puerto Rico Resident Commissioner to the U.S. Congress, Pedro Pierluissi, and the Mayor of San Juan, Carmen Yulín Cruz, have taken similar positions; and the Puerto Rico Senate and House of Representatives have also weighed in on the issue by passing resolutions in their respective bodies in favor of Oscar López Rivera's release;

WHEREAS, the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization has adopted resolutions annually, as recently as 2011, calling on the President of the United States to release Oscar López Rivera;

WHEREAS, AFSCME, LCLAA, and the Puerto Rico AFL-CIO have all passed similar resolutions in their respective conventions;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, the 2013 AFL-CIO Convention calls on the President of the United States to exercise his Constitutional power of pardon, and to grant the immediate and unconditional release of Oscar López Rivera.