

Building an Opportunity Economy for Puerto Rico

Vice President Kamala Harris and Governor Tim Walz will build an Opportunity Economy where everyone—including the people of Puerto Rico—has the opportunity not just to get by, but to get ahead. They are committed to using every available tool to unlock the island’s full potential. Working with the private sector, the Puerto Rican government, municipalities, and other stakeholders, they will fight to strengthen the energy grid, make Puerto Rico a hub for industries of the future, and uplift the island’s role as a vibrant economic and cultural center—empowering Puerto Ricans to realize their dreams and aspirations.

Vice President Harris has long been a champion for Puerto Ricans—both on the island and on the mainland. As a Senator, she visited the island after Hurricane Maria and pressed for equitable disaster relief and pandemic aid. As Vice President, she worked alongside President Biden to unlock billions in disaster relief and recovery funding, which had been deliberately held up by the Trump Administration. This year, she visited the island to underscore the Administration’s commitment to its success with historic investments in infrastructure, health care, economic development programs, modernizing the electrical grid, and more—a commitment shaped by more than 40 Puerto Rican appointees who hold senior roles across the Administration. But Vice President Harris knows that there is more work to be done to equip Puerto Ricans with the resources they need to get ahead, and she is committed to help build Puerto Rico’s future.

Donald Trump Insulted Puerto Ricans and Left Them Behind. Trump has long disrespected Puerto Rico, insulted its people, and withheld billions of dollars for its recovery. He claimed Puerto Ricans “want everything done for them,” derided Puerto Rico as “dirty” and “poor,” and suggested selling Puerto Rico or trading it for Greenland. Trump also vehemently opposed the expansion of federal support to the island. He told his staff that he did not want a single dollar going to Puerto Rico, and he personally intervened in budget talks to ensure Medicaid funding for Puerto Rico was cut in half, while Trump Administration officials opposed \$600 million in additional, critical nutrition assistance as “excessive” and “unnecessary.” While Vice President Harris respects Puerto Rico’s right to self-determination, Trump disparages the right of Puerto Rico to determine its own political future.

Trump Withheld Much-Needed Disaster Relief From Puerto Rico. When Hurricane Maria devastated the island, the Trump Administration’s failed preparation and response contributed to thousands of deaths. Trump did not acknowledge the scale of Puerto Ricans’ suffering—instead, he patted himself on the back and lied about the death toll while most of Puerto Rico lived without clean water and electricity. Rather than deliver meaningful relief for Puerto Ricans, he visited the island to toss paper towels at a crowd. An investigation conducted in the aftermath of Trump’s botched Hurricane Maria response found that he blocked billions in desperately needed aid to Puerto Rico and obstructed the inquiry into why officials withheld about \$20 billion in hurricane relief.

Vice President Harris Will Mobilize the Federal Government to Build an Opportunity Economy in Puerto Rico:

Launch a Puerto Rico Opportunity Economy Task Force.

Vice President Harris will formalize a federal task force to lead a whole-of-government approach to create an Opportunity Economy across Puerto Rico. This task force will focus on rebuilding and revitalizing Puerto Rico’s economic strength, restoring and modernizing the grid, investing in industries of the future, driving small business growth, strengthening the health care system, and lifting up the Puerto Rican people. It will also focus on strengthening the private sector, from supporting startups to small businesses to increasing capacity for larger businesses, and building up industries such as the biosciences, aerospace, electronics, manufacturing, clean energy, construction, and more. The task force will engage and coordinate efforts with stakeholders, including federal departments and agencies, businesses, nonprofits, local government officials, and Puerto Rican community leaders. It will be led by a senior presidential appointee to work closely with local counterparts to ensure the federal government is most effectively leveraging its resources and expertise to support creating an Opportunity Economy in Puerto Rico. This work will be done with an appreciation that Puerto Rico’s economic future will be determined by the Puerto Rican people, and not by the federal government.

Vice President Harris Will Redouble Efforts to Rebuild and Modernize Puerto Rico’s Energy Grid So That Puerto Ricans Have Reliable Access to Electricity to Spur the Island’s Economic Growth:

Build a Resilient Energy Grid by Cutting Red Tape to Get Projects Moving. Puerto Rico’s energy grid and critical infrastructure have suffered massive hurricane damage and require extensive and complex recovery efforts. A Harris-Walz Administration will work with the Puerto Rican government and stakeholders to get more shovels in the ground and speed up the recovery and rebuilding process with appropriate oversight. This includes:

- **Streamlining Permitting.** Vice President Harris is committed to making permitting processes in Puerto Rico work better. She will be laser-focused on accelerating projects by cutting federal red tape and further streamlining processes for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other agencies, including through permitting reform that ensures projects are built quickly and efficiently, reflect local input and local priorities, and protect the environment and public health. This work will build on a recently finalized rule to modernize reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act that creates new ways for projects to qualify for the simplest form of environmental review, promotes early public engagement, and accelerates project reviews while setting clear deadlines—which will help expedite new construction in Puerto Rico and bring down costs.
- **Putting Disaster Relief Funds to Work.** Building on flexibilities the Biden-Harris Administration has provided, Vice President Harris will work with Puerto Rico to more swiftly utilize billions in funding that has already been awarded for disaster recovery projects on the island, including to support a modern, resilient grid that can better withstand future extreme weather events. She will expand federal technical support and increase project review personnel, including a dedicated team for Puerto Rico. And she will work with Congress to boost investments in high-quality workforce development programs for construction and energy jobs, to support Puerto Rico in preparing the skilled workforce it needs to carry out projects critical to its recovery and renewal.
- **Creating New Grid Resilience Incentives.** Vice President Harris will work with Congress to incentivize private companies to build more resilient grid infrastructure in Puerto Rico, such as a tax credit to lower the costs of putting power lines underground and deploying localized “microgrids.” These investments will help ensure Puerto Rico’s grid can withstand future extreme weather events.
- **Pursuing Innovative Energy Markets to Support the Grid.** Vice President Harris will also support innovative approaches to strengthening the resilience and reliability of Puerto Rico’s grid, whether through additional clean energy investments or increased connectivity between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

Expand Puerto Rican Families’ Access to Clean Energy.

Vice President Harris cast the tie-breaking vote to pass the Inflation Reduction Act, the largest investment in climate action in history. As President, she will unite Americans to tackle the climate crisis, including increasing resilience to climate disasters and lowering household energy costs. This will also help Puerto Rico reach its goal of producing 100% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2050. For Puerto Rico, this work includes:

- **Ensuring Puerto Ricans Can Fully Access the Clean Energy Tax Credits That Are Spurring a Clean Energy Revolution Across America.** Vice President Harris will work with Congress to provide Puerto Ricans equal access to up to \$10,000 in tax benefits in the Inflation Reduction Act for any family who wants to switch to cleaner appliances, install solar panels, or purchase an electric vehicle—saving households an average of \$2,800 on their energy bills every year.
- **Surge the Puerto Rico Energy Resilience Fund.** Vice President Harris will work with Congress to increase the scale of the Puerto Rico Energy Resilience Fund fivefold—to advance projects that will improve the resilience of Puerto Rico’s grid and support low- and moderate-income households, including through renewable energy and storage solutions. As part of this effort, she will scale up Acceso Solar, a program at the Department of Energy that currently incentivizes the installation of roughly 30,000 residential solar and battery systems for Puerto Rico’s most vulnerable households. Hurricane-resistant distributed solar energy can provide resilience and more predictable access to energy, especially while Puerto Rico’s grid is under construction, and Vice President Harris will support implementation and increase the number of households receiving support from this program.

Vice President Harris Will Invest to Ensure Puerto Rico Is Economically Secure, Creating Opportunities for the Island’s Next Generation to Prosper:

Provide Access to Housing That Puerto Rican Families and Workers Can Afford.

Vice President Harris knows that rising housing costs in Puerto Rico are squeezing Puerto Ricans out of the market, forcing them to spend exorbitant portions of their income on rent, and hampering their ability to afford other essentials like food, gas, and lifesaving medications. Vice President Harris has a comprehensive housing plan to lower the costs of renting and owning a home for American families, including in Puerto Rico. She will build 3 million new affordable homes across the country, including on the island, and she will offer up to \$25,000 in down payment assistance for first-time and first-generation homebuyers. She will also unlock new rental housing and owner-occupied housing by expanding the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and creating a new tax credit to incentivize the private sector to build or rehabilitate homes that are affordable.

Invest in Working and Middle-Class Families in Puerto Rico.

Vice President Harris cast the tie-breaking vote on legislation to permanently bring the Child Tax Credit for Puerto Rico in parity with the mainland—and now, she is proposing to expand the Child Tax Credit to up to \$6,000 for parents of newborns and up to \$3,600 per child after that, including for working and middle-class Puerto Rican families. That legislation also enhanced Puerto Rico’s version of the Earned Income Tax Credit, quadrupling it for Puerto Rican workers—and now, Vice President Harris is proposing to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit to cover individuals and couples in lower-income jobs who aren’t raising a child in their home, cutting their taxes by up to \$1,500.

Support Puerto Ricans’ Equal Access to Federal Support.

Vice President Harris will push Congress to pursue parity and equal access to key federal programs that support health care, nutrition, and other critical needs for low-income families, seniors, and people with disabilities. These programs bolster the health care system, give urgently needed assistance to residents, and provide budgetary relief to the Puerto Rican government.

Advance Health Service Delivery in Puerto Rico.

Vice President Harris will task her Department of Health and Human Services to assess the health care system in Puerto Rico, in partnership with Puerto Rican officials and providers, and provide recommendations on how to strengthen it, including taking on the shortage of doctors and other health care professionals, addressing resource needs, and improving service delivery.

Enhance Puerto Rico’s Competitiveness in Industries of the Future, Including in Biosciences and Manufacturing.

Vice President Harris has proposed an America Forward agenda targeting investment and job creation in key strategic industries essential to our economic growth and national security, including biotechnology, artificial intelligence, innovation, clean

energy manufacturing, semiconductors, aerospace, autos, and industrial tools and machines—and Puerto Rico will be fully eligible for these benefits. Vice President Harris’s America Forward agenda will include unique tax credits for pharmaceutical companies operating in Puerto Rico to bolster an industry that has long driven economic opportunity on the island, paired with assurances that these companies are offering employees adequate benefits and ensuring workplace safety.

Invest in Building Up Puerto Rico’s Next Generation of Doctors, Teachers, and More, Including to Address the Shortage of Health Care Providers.

Puerto Rico is home to more than 50 colleges and universities that are Hispanic-Serving Institutions, which are charged with educating the island’s next generation of leaders, including doctors, health care professionals, teachers, and more. Puerto Rico is confronting a shortage of health care providers as well as teachers in STEM and other areas. In particular, Puerto Rico is estimated to have lost nearly half of its doctors in just over a decade, straining the health care system. Vice President Harris has pledged to invest in Minority-Serving Institutions like Puerto Rico’s colleges and universities, with a focus on building up this next generation for the communities that need them most.

Build Puerto Rico’s Workforce of the Future.

Vice President Harris will also support partnerships with businesses, unions, school districts, community colleges, faith-based groups, and other key stakeholders to strengthen access to high-quality, evidence-based workforce development programs and create new training opportunities in Puerto Rico in industries of the future. To help Puerto Ricans prepare for and contribute to the island’s revitalization, she will create registered apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, joint-labor management partnerships, and other training opportunities that lead to good-paying jobs in industries of the future, including clean energy, construction, the biosciences, and the aerospace industry, for workers with or without a college degree. She will also continue to invest in Puerto Rico’s public schools to strengthen STEM education as we prepare the next generation of workers and researchers to compete globally.

Fund Programs Like Small Business Boot Camps, Business Mentoring, and Navigators, and Support Community Colleges, to Give Puerto Ricans the Tools to Start a Business or Take a More Managerial Job.

Many Puerto Ricans have the experience, expertise, and entrepreneurial energy to start their own business and be their own boss. Yet some need resources to develop a business plan and get the financing they need. Vice President Harris will support proven small-business boot camp models and industry-community college partnerships that are designed to give aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners the tools they need to succeed as a small business owner or executive.

Expand Innovative High School-to-Career Partnerships in Puerto Rico. Across the nation, there has been a rise in high school career academies and innovative partnerships with companies, hospitals, and colleges that allow young people to start working toward a good career while they are in high school—whether through a guaranteed job at a participating employer or through a head start on a college or a technical degree. Students across the country are gaining skills in the technology, health care, and other STEM fields to give them a head start on good, high-demand jobs. Vice President Harris will provide funding to support the expansion of 1,000 high school partnerships nationwide, including in Puerto Rico, with employers, unions, and institutions of higher education, to give high school students a faster and clearer path toward a rewarding career—by opening up access to Advanced Placement courses, dual enrollment, and career-credentialing opportunities.

Expand Bilingual Education and Literacy. Vice President Harris knows that bilingualism is a tremendous competitive advantage. That is why she will ensure Puerto Ricans can harness these advantages by investing in high-quality bilingual education and English language acquisition programs while also supporting literacy programs from early childhood education to adulthood—which will also enhance Puerto Rico's strength in professional and business services.

Enhance Lending to Puerto Rican Entrepreneurs to Start and Grow Small Businesses. Vice President Harris's plan will provide loans that are fully forgivable of up to \$20,000 to Puerto Rican entrepreneurs and others who have historically faced barriers to starting a new business or growing an existing business, in partnership with community banks and other trusted organizations. Vice President Harris has already laid out a plan to help more small businesses start, innovate, and expand. And she's said she will cut unnecessary red tape that makes it harder for small businesses to hire a reliable workforce and get off the ground. In addition, Vice President Harris will expand loans to small businesses through a new lending fund for community banks and community development financial institutions (CDFIs), which allows entrepreneurs or growing small businesses to defer payment and interest on loans for two years or get interest-free loans for at least four years—helping to give entrepreneurs breathing room to start or grow their businesses.

Enhance Access to Banking and Lending to Help Puerto Ricans Build Wealth. Vice President Harris will work with the private sector to increase access to affordable, trusted banking options that will help those locked out of the banking system, and the wealth building that comes with it, because of high fees to save, invest, and build credit. She will also seek to meaningfully extend a temporary exemption that allows financial institutions across the country to get Community Reinvestment Act credit outside their service area for investments in Puerto Rico—broadening access to loans for individuals and businesses across Puerto Rico.

Make Puerto Rico an Air Cargo Transit Hub and Advance Puerto Rico's Aerospace Industry. Building on Puerto Rico's success as an aerospace hub, including its maintenance, repair, and overhaul facilities, Vice President Harris will work with Congress to enact legislation to help make Puerto Rico an international air cargo transit hub. This will bring significant new investments and jobs to the island and ensure the Puerto Rican economy can take full advantage of its strategic location.

Invest in Puerto Rican Artists and Creators. Puerto Rico has had a major cultural impact on the United States and the world, which has also benefited the U.S. economy, but up-and-coming artists and creators in Puerto Rico today face major structural barriers to protecting, marketing, and earning income from their talent and creations. Vice President Harris will launch a major arts and culture initiative in Puerto Rico. She will engage with the U.S. Copyright Office to provide support and training for creators on how to protect their creations, and partner with Puerto Rican educational institutions to expand training and career pathways for artists and creators.