

POLL FINDS FLORIDA PUERTO RICANS WANT CONGRESS TO CAP FEDERAL FEDERAL BAILOUT TO BRITISH RUM MAKER DIAGEO

Government 2010-02-05 17:25:34

Washington, DC& Miami, FL – In the crucial swing state of Florida, more than four-fifths of the Puerto Rican electorate indicated in a new survey that Congress' failure to solve a controversy over misuse of federal tax rebates by the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) will be an important factor in how they vote in the upcoming elections.

The Puerto Rican electorate in Florida is considered one of the most critical swing voting blocs, influencing and sometimes determining the outcome of statewide elections.

By a three-to-one margin, Puerto Ricans surveyed said it was "wrong" of the USVI to lure the British-owned producer of Captain Morgan rum from Puerto Rico to the USVI with a federal bailout of nearly \$3 billion in U.S. tax subsidies. The USVI offered London-based Diageo—the largest spirits company in the world—50 percent of all tax subsidies as opposed to 10 percent from Puerto Rico.

"The poll clearly indicates that Puerto Rican voters in Florida react negatively to Diageo's deal with the government of the USVI. These voters fear that the Puerto Rican government would have less money for infrastructure, health, education and environmental projects if the Diageo deal with the USVI is allowed to stand," said Miami based pollster Sergio Bendixen, president of Bendixen & Amandi. "This is the first poll conducted on a statewide level of this all important voting bloc. Puerto Ricans strongly support legislation that would prohibit the governments of both Puerto Rico and the USVI to give more than 10 percent of their federal rum tax subsidy to rum companies."

"For decades the Puerto Rican government has successfully used 90 percent of its subsidies from rum manufacturers to support critical infrastructure and social services programs, while successfully growing its rum industry into being one the best known and highest quality in the world," said Rafael A. Fantauzzi, president and CEO of National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc., whose non-profit organization commissioned the poll.

The poll also found:

75 percent supported legislation to cap federal tax subsidies to U.S. territories to 10 percent going to marketing of locally produced rum sold in the U.S. mainland, with 90 percent of these taxes located for social needs of the territories, such as education, infrastructure, roads, water treatment facilities, hospitals and other public works needs. Only 3 percent opposed.

84 percent said how a candidate stands on this issue will be an important factor in who they support in the upcoming election

"It is alarming that some members of Congress are willing to overlook -- and even support -- a deal that gives Captain Morgan's parent company, British-based Diageo, a subsidy of almost \$3 billion of our tax dollars while our American businesses and disenfranchised population cope with an almost catastrophic economic environment," added Fantauzzi.

"Forget pirates on the high-seas, Captain Morgan is in Washington ready to take his bounty."

The phone survey conducted last week canvassed 400 registered Puerto Rican voters in Florida. The sample was scientifically designed to represent the Puerto Rican voting population and drawn entirely from official registered voter lists and has a margin of error +/- five percentage points.

For copies of the poll summary and/or interviews, please contact:

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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.

Sources: National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc. and Bendixen & Amandi

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