

(S. B. 2559)
(Conference)

(No. 166)

(Approved June 28, 2004)

AN ACT

To add a Section 1-A and amend subsection (l) of Section 2 of Act No. 171 of August 11, 2002, known as the “Port of the Americas Authority Act,” in order to denominate the transshipment port being constructed in the southern zone of Puerto Rico with the name “Rafael ‘Churumba’ Cordero Santiago Port of the Americas.”

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

On October 24, 1942, the honorable Rafael Cordero Santiago was born from the loving union of his parents *Don* Bernardino Cordero Bernard and *Doña* María de los Santos Santiago, in the village of La Playa of the municipality of Ponce, of which city he was the Mayor until last January 17.

“Churumba,” as he was affectionately known by everybody, attended the Ramiro Colón and the Dr. Rafael A. Pujals during his elementary education; he attended the McKinley school during his middle school years; and then he attended Ponce High during his high school years. Subsequently, in 1964, he obtained a bachelor’s degree in Arts with a major in Political, Economics and Social Sciences from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Ponce, which earned him a job on that same year at the Department of Commerce of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Two years later, he excelled as a special aide of the then President of the Senate and childhood friend, the honorable Rafael Hernández Colón. In 1973, he

returns to the Department to hold the position of Auxiliary Secretary of Domestic Commerce.

After having served as a public official for around 11 years, he returns to work in the private sector, and it is not until 1981 that, at the request of the then President of the Popular Democratic Party, the honorable Rafael Hernández Colón, he returns to the political arena in the function of presidential delegate. Two years later, he again holds a position in the Government; this time, he was in charge of directing the works of the Right to Work Administration.

It is by January 2, 1989, that he takes office as the Mayor of the town in which he was born—Ponce, the *Ciudad Señorial*. From this office, he procured the cultural, social and economic development of his municipality, a task which he took to heart and earned him the recognition of his political colleagues, his opposers and his constituents as a zealous defender of the interests of the territory of Ponce and all of Puerto Rico, as well. His outstanding fight for human rights and the rights of those most in need is evinced in the major role he played in the opposition to the presence of the United States Navy in Vieques and the establishment of the relocatable in Fort Allen in Juana Díaz and the valley of Lajas.

For his fight against the presence of the Navy in the territory of Vieques, he was arrested, found guilty and imprisoned for a period of 1 month, after having trespassed territory restricted by said military body in the *Isla Nena*. Furthermore, as part of his protest for not agreeing with the intention of the Government of the United States of America of establishing a radar here, he threatened to stand in front of the machinery to be used to build said project—an action that earned him the criticism of various opposers, but the admiration of an entire people.

These actions, which far outreached the territorial limits of his municipality, are the reason why many turned their eyes to the *Perla del Sur* and see “Churumba” as a great political leader, and mostly, as a civic leader. Service was his calling, and the happiness of his people was, most certainly, his satisfaction.

As part of his political facet, he always stood out for being a passionate defender of the interests of his fellow townspeople, even if he had to go above the interests of his own political party, if necessary. He was forceful in fight and he posed a great challenge for his detractors, but at all times he showed class and respect in speaking. His fervor led him on one occasion to demand at the courts that the works of the infrastructure project known as “Ponce en Marcha” be continued. Because of his efforts, our Supreme Court ordered that said works be resumed, which project is until this day still under construction.

He also played a key role on an intense debate because he believed that the development known as the Port of the Americas should be located in the Municipality of Ponce, an objective which he achieved. However, his efforts were not limited merely to the matter of location; at all times he advocated for the transshipment port of the southern area to begin operations as soon as possible for the benefit of all residents of said sector and the entire Puerto Rican economy.

Unfortunately, last Saturday, January 17, 2004, the People of Puerto Rico stood witness to the departure from this earthly plane of one of his most devoted sons, the “león mayor,” leaving behind a legacy which will be difficult to emulate by any public official, but for which all Puerto Ricans, and especially the people of Ponce, will be forever grateful.

For all of the stated above, and with the intent to perpetuate and honor his memory, the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico hereby establishes that the official name of the transshipment port of the southern area of Puerto Rico shall be “Rafael ‘Churumba’ Cordero Santiago Port of the Americas.”

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.—A Section 1-A is hereby added and subsection (l) of Section 2 is amended in Act No. 171 of August 11, 2002, to read as follows:

“Section 1-A.—Name.—

The facilities to be constructed as part of the transshipment port of the southern area of Puerto Rico shall be known as the ‘Rafael “Churumba” Cordero Santiago Port of the Americas.’

Section 2.—Definitions.—

The following terms shall have the meanings stated hereinbelow, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, and the words used in singular shall include the plural and vice versa:

(a) ...

(l) Port of the Americas or Port: The navigable waters of the Rafael ‘Churumba’ Cordero Santiago Port of the Americas and its port zone, maritime-land zone, lands submerged under port waters, and adjacent lands included in the geographic area within which the activities of the transshipment port located in the southern region of Puerto Rico are conducted, including piers, berths, wharves, jetties, breakwaters, dikes, docks, railroad connections, sidings, or other buildings, structures, facilities, or improvements used for navigation, the accommodation of ships and their cargo, the

storage of cargo and containers, the handling of cargo and containers, the transfer activities, and any other activity incidental to the foregoing. The Board of Directors of the Port of the Americas Authority shall determine the scope of the geographic area that will comprise the Rafael ‘Churumba’ Cordero Santiago Port of the Americas.

(m) ...”

Section 2.—Concerning the present denomination, the Puerto Rico Public Structure and Highway Naming Commission is hereby exempted from complying with the provisions of Act No. 99 of June 22, 1961, as amended.

Section 3.—The Port of the Americas Authority, together with the Autonomous Municipal Government of Ponce, shall take the necessary actions to achieve the implementation of the provisions of this Act.

Section 4.—This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following Act No. 166 (S.B. 2559) (Conference) of the 7th Session of the 14th Legislature of Puerto Rico:

AN ACT to add a Section 1-A and amend subsection (1) of Section 2 of Act No. 171 of August 11, 2002, known as the “Port of the Americas Authority Act,” in order to denominate the transshipment port being constructed in the southern zone of Puerto Rico with the name “Rafael ‘Churumba’ Cordero Santiago Port of the Americas,

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, today 4th of April of 2005.

Luis E. Fusté-Lacourt
Director