

(H. B. 1929)

**(No. 107)**

(Approved May 26, 2006)

## **AN ACT**

To direct the Public Structures and Highways Naming Commission of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to name road number one hundred ten (110), which extends from road number two (2) south up to the access to “Gate 5” of the old Ramey Base as “Avenida Miguel Angel García Méndez, who was the founder of the Republican Statehood Party, Speaker of the House of Representatives, a member of the Constitutional Convention and Senator at Large.

## **STATEMENT OF MOTIVES**

In order to be successful, the progress of the people towards the future requires that certain fundamental values be upheld throughout all changes. To uphold those values, it is necessary to distinguish and honor the figure of those persons who in the past and at present have been an example of the value of work, integrity, study, loyalty to causes and commitment to serve society.

Miguel Angel García Méndez, an illustrious Puerto Rican, was born in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, on November 17, 1902. At a very early age, he began the process of making history in Puerto Rico. He was admitted to the School of Law of the University of Puerto Rico in 1917, before he turned 15 years old. He graduated, at age 19, after submitting a thesis that was later commented in prestigious foreign institutions, he claimed his right before the Judicial Branch of that time to be allowed to take the Bar Examination

without having come of age, thus becoming the youngest person to have passed the Bar Examination.

While intensely active in political endeavors, García Méndez was elected to the Representative House by the Puerto Rican Alliance in 1928, and was elected Speaker of the House by the Socialist Coalition-Republican Union in 1933, a position he held until 1940, once again the youngest in our brief democratic history. During those twelve (12) years, he excelled as an imaginative, productive legislator with foresight to challenge all the programmatic areas of a government that, in a time of scarcity, required creativity and tenacity to deal with the problems and needs of our people. His first efforts were directed to measures and proposals that were perfected and which became legislative pieces of great significance in our daily lives such as the State Insurance Fund Act, the Industrial Development Corporation, the Tourism Company and the Olympic Committee. Universal suffrage, regardless of gender or literacy and which later became a part of our Constitution was approved while he was Speaker of the House of Representatives.

García Méndez, after having spent some time in the private sector, decided to return to public life in 1951, as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, excelling in debates on the Bill of Rights and the Preamble; thus achieving recognition for U.S. Citizenship as a fundamental factor in our development as a People by the Constitution. In 1952, after being elected President of the Statehood Republican Party, he was elected Senator at Large, thus returning to the Legislature as the Floor Leader of the statehood delegation in the Puerto Rico Senate.

In his endeavors as a private citizen and entrepreneur, he excelled out in several industries and businesses, one of the most noteworthy being the

foundation of the banking institution that is known at present as Westernbank, which gave the western region a dynamic presence in the world of banking that still exists today. Author of numerous essays on political development and opinion columns in the press, García Méndez purchased the newspaper “El Imparcial,” which was the second most important newspaper in the Island in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

All those who knew García Méndez attest to his flair for public speaking, of refined speech, elegant and convincing, one of the greatest Puerto Rican public speakers, acknowledged and renowned as “El Pitirre” [“The Kingbird”] of Puerto Rican oratory. He was leader in times in which elegance prevailed in legislative dealings and political debate without ceasing to be firm, incisive, and passionate in the defense of ideals, government programs and supervision. In a masterful lesson of character, after his political upset in 1968, he wasted no time in recriminations, lamentations or imposing conditions in order to make way for the new generations of his movement; he instead recognized the new realities and renewed his efforts to improve society from his role as a private citizen. In spite of being in the minority in the second half of his public life, he greatly influenced the legislation adopted by his fellow senators of the Majority, who recognized his capability and experience as politician, entrepreneur and industrialist. The testimony that with greatest dignity summarized the value of his service to Puerto Rico was made upon his death in the eulogy delivered by a political and ideological adversary from a younger generation, the Honorable ex-Governor Rafael Hernández Colón.

The political career and legislative service of Miguel Angel García Méndez transcended partisan conflict and division. His professional industrial and entrepreneurial deeds advanced the development of the West

of Puerto Rico and generated significant economic activity in the Metropolitan Area. On the other hand, his civic and humanitarian work was silent, granting scholarships to talented students without making it known. However, his political vocation earned him the respect and admiration of people of similar beliefs and adversaries, and of a people who, even in times when it could not offer the benefits of power, listened to him with awe in the public squares of the towns of the Island at which he rendered the most eloquent speeches.

At present, Road No. 110, from Road No. 2 south up to Gate 5 is not designated with a specific name. Who better than Miguel Angel García Méndez, a native son of that city, to serve as an example of devotion to public service, honesty and integrity? The approval of a measure like this one should not be a matter of “recommending” it for “consideration.” This designation should not be cause for controversy or questioning as to whether it is or is not appropriate; the record speaks for itself.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF PUERTO RICO:**

Section 1.- The Public Structures and Highways Naming Commission of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is hereby directed to name Road No. one hundred ten (110), from Road No. two (2) south up to the access of “Gate 5” of the old Ramey Base as “Avenida Miguel Angel García Méndez.”

Section 2.- In compliance with Act No. 99 of June 22, 1961, as amended, the Public Structures and Highways Naming Commission of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico shall take the necessary steps to comply with the provisions of this Act.

Section 3.- This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

## CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following Act No. 107 (H.B. 1929) of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the 15<sup>th</sup> Legislature of Puerto Rico:

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

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, today 17<sup>th</sup> of September of 2007.

Francisco J. Domenech  
Director