

José Lorenzo Pesquera

1882–1950

RESIDENT COMMISSIONER 1932–1933
NONPARTISAN FROM PUERTO RICO

One of the few Members to be appointed to the U.S. House of Representatives, rather than elected, José Pesquera served nearly a year as a nominally nonpartisan Resident Commissioner during a period of political and economic upheaval in Puerto Rico and the United States.¹ Trained as a lawyer, Pesquera was passionate about farming, and he spent his short congressional career attempting to bolster Puerto Rican agricultural and economic interests in the midst of the Great Depression. “I must give special recognition to the good farmers ... who, regardless of their political affiliations were the driving force behind the idea of my candidacy,” Pesquera declared upon his nomination. “I will make every effort to be capable of being worthy of the honor conferred on me and of the trust that everyone has placed in me.”²

José Lorenzo Pesquera was born in Bayamón, Puerto Rico, just southwest of San Juan, on August 10, 1882, to José J. Pesquera and Inés Dávila.³ He attended a primary and secondary school run by his maternal uncle and graduated from the Provincial Institute of Puerto Rico with a degree in secondary education in 1897. He subsequently studied English at Keystone State Normal School, in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, from 1901 to 1902. In 1904 he earned his law degree from West Virginia University in Morgantown and was admitted to the state’s bar. Shortly afterward, Pesquera returned to Puerto Rico, where he was admitted to the territory’s bar and opened a law practice. He also engaged in dairy farming. On December 25, 1908, he married Encarnación López del Valle from Toa Alta.⁴ In 1917 Pesquera won election as a Partido Republicano (Puerto Rican Republican) to the territorial house of representatives, where he served until 1920. The Partido Republicano was generally aligned with small-business interests on the island and sympathized with, but had no official ties to, the mainland GOP.⁵ In 1927 Pesquera was

appointed director of the Agricultural Association of Puerto Rico, a powerful advocacy group for the territory’s land-owning farmers. Throughout his tenure, he served on several economic commissions to the United States, and he was frequently in contact with Members of the U.S. Congress.⁶

On April 11, 1932, Puerto Rican Resident Commissioner Félix Córdova Dávila resigned to become an associate justice on the territory’s supreme court. His departure came amid a series of political realignments—primarily related to Puerto Rico’s relationship with the United States—leading into the November 1932 elections.⁷ Tasked with appointing Dávila’s replacement, Puerto Rican governor James R. Beverley, a recent Hoover administration appointee and a former U.S. Attorney General, navigated the volatile political landscape by soliciting suggestions for nominees from the island’s political parties.⁸ The ensuing political scramble sparked protests against the partisan nature of the nomination process. Editorials in major newspapers confirmed the widespread belief that, because Resident Commissioners were elected every four years as part of a party slate, the governor should appoint a representative of the former Alianza (Alliance), which had been absorbed by the Partido Unión Republicano (Union Republican Party), out of respect for Dávila’s former affiliation. “In my opinion,” Rafael Cuevas Zequeira wrote Governor Beverley, removing his name from the list of nominees, “the function of the Governor of Puerto Rico, in good government ethics and considering the political nature of the position of resident commissioner, consists of filling the ministerial duty to fill the vacancy created through the resignation of the office that the people elected and appointing the candidate chosen by the majority party.”⁹

As the Unión Republicano loyalist considered the “least political” among the front-runners, Pesquera soon





emerged as the leading candidate and received support from influential business groups on the island. Telegrams supporting him began trickling into Governor Beverley's office.¹⁰ On the afternoon of April 15, just before the Puerto Rican senate prepared to adjourn indefinitely, the governor submitted Pesquera's name for consideration.¹¹ Early in the evening, the senate appointments committee ruled in Pesquera's favor. When the full senate took up the appointment in the early-morning hours of April 16, Santiago Iglesias and the Partido Socialista (Socialist Party) launched the strongest opposition to Pesquera's nomination. At a quarter past two in the morning, a packed gallery listened to Iglesias's lengthy speech opposing the nominee.¹² He rejected the appointment based on political attacks Pesquera had made as president of the Alianza Agrícola (Agricultural Alliance) against the territory's house and senate leaders. Pesquera's supporters included Unión Republicano president Rafael Martínez Nadal, who defended him against charges that he represented only large international conglomerations on the island, noting that his organization also defended small farmers. "As of this time he will no longer be president of the Farmers Association and will become the defender of all the country's interests in the U.S. Congress," *La correspondencia* wrote, paraphrasing Martínez Nadal: "There he will defend farmers' interests with the same energy as he will defend the interest of laborers and all other interests of Puerto Rico."¹³ The senate overwhelmingly approved Pesquera's nomination at three o'clock in the morning by a vote of 11 to 3; all the Socialista senators opposed it, and the Partido Liberal (Liberal Party) members abstained from voting.¹⁴ Pesquera left for Washington a day later, telling *La correspondencia*, "My dearest wish is to negotiate the legislation most advantageous to the country and I will direct all my activities in the north to achieving that goal."¹⁵ He was sworn in on April 28, 1932.¹⁶ Though Pesquera claimed no party affiliation, the *New York Times* described him as "nominally a Republican."¹⁷ Pesquera took a seat on the Insular Affairs Committee.¹⁸

Pesquera arrived in Washington during one of the most tumultuous periods in Puerto Rican history under

U.S. rule.¹⁹ Interconnected factors created political instability. Absentee agricultural corporations monopolized an industry that was overly dependent on exports of cash crops, including sugar, tobacco, and coffee. Low agricultural wages and poor living standards, along with a booming population, magnified the effects of the worldwide depression in Puerto Rico; by 1933 the island's unemployment rate stood at 65 percent.²⁰ Pesquera promised to address national issues that were pertinent to economic recovery, including control over Puerto Rico's alcohol sales. An amendment to the Jones Act of 1917, which granted Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship, allowed them to hold a referendum to extend Prohibition to the island. In July 1917, they voted nearly two to one to ban the sale and consumption of alcohol, primarily out of loyalty to the U.S. The law frequently went unenforced, however, and by the early 1930s, selling alcohol was suggested as a method for raising revenue for the cash-strapped insular government.²¹ "Prohibition ... is a problem with deep economic and moral implications for our people," Pesquera observed. "As to what Prohibition represents to the island's public finances, it suffices to say that with the revenue we used to take in from income tax and other taxes on imports and the sale of liquors, we would have enough to balance our budget completely, to free some of the country's farmers and merchants from their burdens and to continue building public works to attest to our desire for progress and comfort." He vowed to request the "right to write our internal regulations in matters of Prohibition," noting that "[t]his would be perfectly legal if we bear in mind that it is the Volstead Act that governs our island, not the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution."²² With 15 percent of Puerto Rico's foreign trade costs going to freight alone, Pesquera also promised to amend shipping laws to prohibit all but U.S. flag ships from transporting goods between the mainland and Puerto Rico so as to end competition between international freighter services. He also believed that reducing tariffs and taxes to create "free zones" of trade in Puerto Rico "would give an extraordinary impulse to our economic life."²³

However, Pesquera's first action in Congress concerned a different goal. His first and longest speech on the House Floor advocated a bill introduced by his predecessor, Córdova Dávila, to change the territory's name from "Porto Rico," the official U.S. government spelling since the Foraker Act passed in 1900, back to the original "Puerto Rico." Pesquera was one of the final Members to speak about the issue: "Puerto Rico is the name we have given to our fair land. Puerto Rico is the word associated with the tombs of our parents and the cradles of our sons. Puerto Rico is the word we have consecrated as representative of our patriotic sentiments," he declared. Further, Pesquera compared the islanders' attachment to the traditional spelling with a mother's sentimental attachment to a ribbon in her daughter's hair. "We know that this Congress of the United States is not willing to impose itself upon the patriotic feelings of the people of Puerto Rico, and we know that we are going to have the restitution that we are asking for in this bill which is of no significance whatever to the United States from an economic standpoint," he said. "But which is of immense significance to the high feelings and patriotic sentiment of one and a half millions of American citizens in the island of Puerto Rico."²⁴ The arguments in favor of the legislation did not fall on deaf ears, and in May 1932 the House concurred in a voice vote with a Senate Joint Resolution that changed the territory's name back to "Puerto Rico."²⁵

Having scored a cultural victory, Pesquera spent the majority of his truncated term seeking immediate relief for his constituents from economic depression. He requested an extension of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) benefits and loans to Puerto Rico.²⁶ Initiated at the request of President Herbert Hoover in January 1932, and dubbed "a millionaire's dole" by New York Representative Fiorello La Guardia, the RFC funneled federal tax revenue directly to failing banks.²⁷ On May 10, Pesquera introduced a bill extending the RFC's benefits to Puerto Rico, but the bill died in the Committee on Banking and Currency.²⁸

On June 10, during a debate on another bill establishing a system of federal home-loan banks to forestall a run of foreclosures linked to the Great Depression, Republican

Representative Louis McFadden of Pennsylvania offered an amendment extending the bill's benefits to Puerto Rico. Proponents accused McFadden, a former banker, of burdening the bill with amendments to prevent its final passage, but McFadden argued that the bill was unfair to the island territory. "Puerto Rico is one of the best sources of trade with the United States that there is in the Atlantic," he explained. "I think it would be a particular hardship on Puerto Rico, and would be a discrimination against it, to keep it from receiving the benefits of this particular legislation." Pesquera entered the debate, noting that the 1917 Jones Act dictated the "intention of this Congress to make Puerto Rico participate, as a community of American citizens, in all legislation that is contemplated to be of benefit to the rest of the American citizens." Fielding questions on the soundness of Puerto Rican banks—and reassuring incredulous Members that Puerto Ricans held home loans—Pesquera described the island's bleak financial situation. "We are not asking alms," he declared. Conceding that Puerto Ricans did not pay federal taxes, Pesquera emphasized the territory's role as a trading partner with the mainland. "We are your sixth best customer in the whole world," he observed. "If it is true that the taxpayers of this country may have to make a little sacrifice in order to give us the benefits of this law, it is also true that they, being the business men of this country, are going to continue to get a benefit in their business with the island of Puerto Rico."²⁹ The amendment passed moments later, 55 to 26.³⁰ President Hoover signed the Federal Home Loan Bank Act into law on July 22, 1932.³¹

Pesquera had been in office less than six months when the island's ever-shifting political parties chose their candidates for the upcoming election. With the Partido Unión Republicano and the Partido Socialista merging into the Coalición in response to the newly organized Partido Liberal, the nomination of candidates for Resident Commissioner for the 1932 election was bitter and chaotic. A colorful editorial appeared in early September in *El mundo*, a newspaper that generally supported the Partido Unión Republicano, promoting Pesquera as the candidate most likely to represent "the anonymous legion

of informed citizens whose political leanings do not tend toward blind fanaticisms ... whose sincere love for their native soil does not brood in brains disturbed by hunger or by fear and whose daily bread does not depend on election results.” The author described him “as the logical, unquestionable representative to Washington for the next term, and as a person who should be sent there, not only by one party alone, but by the entire people of Puerto Rico united.”³² However, Pesquera did not approve of his party’s political merger. In a dramatic move at the Agricultural Association Convention on September 11, Pesquera officially left the Partido Unión Republicano and threatened to form a new, agrarian-backed party.³³ Enemies and allies alike called for his resignation.³⁴ “Pesquera has hoped to sacrifice the farmers cause to his foolhardy, feverish ambition to hold on to the office of Resident Commissioner,” spat Socialista vice president Bolívar Pagán.³⁵ Pesquera’s old ally, Rafael Martínez Nadal, dismissed Pesquera as an unskillful representative in Washington. If not for his aides and other Puerto Ricans lobbying Congress, including Santiago Iglesias, Martínez Nadal claimed, “Pesquera would probably have lost a month in wandering the streets of Washington, looking for the government offices.”³⁶ Partido Liberal leaders considered nominating Pesquera at their convention later in September, primarily in an attempt to court the members of the powerful Agricultural Association. However, Pesquera declined the nomination, throwing his support behind the eventual nominee, Fernández García.³⁷

Pesquera’s defection allowed him to act independently in Washington, a freedom he embraced after Puerto Rico was devastated by the San Cipriano Hurricane, whose eye passed over the territory on the night of September 26 and 27, 1932. Estimating winds of more than 120 miles per hour, the local National Weather Bureau office noted that “only the heaviest construction of masonry and concrete, with cemented tile roofs, came out of the zone of heavy damage unscathed.” The death toll reached 225, with 3,000 more reported injured.³⁸ Pesquera sent President Hoover a memorandum seeking immediate relief for the thousands of homeless residents, requesting U.S.

Army supplies including “tents, cots and blankets” and immediate government loans to three local banks to restore public confidence.³⁹ Receiving a response he characterized as “disheartening,” he visited the President on October 1.⁴⁰

Failing to capture aid or attention from the Hoover administration, Pesquera publicized the administration’s equivocal response in a politically calculated move. Submitting a letter he sent to Senator Robert Wagner of New York, a frequent advocate of Puerto Rican issues, to several Spanish-language newspapers, Pesquera outlined his correspondence with the Hoover White House as well as with the War Department, which was assigned to the relief efforts. He blasted the administration’s refusal to provide 5,000 tents and 30,000 cots and blankets, despite their “admitting they have these supplies and transport facilities for immediate shipment.” Pesquera’s insinuation that the U.S. government purposely neglected Puerto Rico after the destructive storm landed on the front page of English- and Spanish-language newspapers in New York and Puerto Rico.⁴¹ “The Administration’s attitude is as amazing as it is heartless,” he seethed. “[T]he War Department has always furnished these supplies to victims of similar disasters not only in the United States but throughout the world.” Alluding to the upcoming 1932 election, Pesquera said, “It seems to me that Puerto Rico is doubly unfortunate in that the calamity has come when [the] continental United States is engaged in a political campaign and politically minded officials seem to think that distressed communities on the mainland will complain if succor is afforded Puerto Rico while denied to other American communities. Isn’t this ‘playing politics with human misery?’” he asked.⁴²

Pesquera’s publicity captured the attention of Hoover officials, who were engaged in a close and highly charged campaign against Democratic candidate Franklin Delano Roosevelt centering on a referendum in Hoover’s approach to economic relief in the Great Depression. Puerto Ricans were generally unhappy with Hoover’s relief efforts, and their sentiments were shared by the Puerto Rican diaspora living in New York City, who increasingly were agitating for aid.⁴³ “The Porto Ricans are complaining,” New York state Republican committee chairman J. W. Krueger wrote



the White House. “[A]nd this is valuable ammunition to the Democratic candidates and orators at this time.”⁴⁴ Krueger added that Pesquera had become “one of the leading speakers and an important figure at practically all the Democratic meetings among Puerto Ricans” in New York City.⁴⁵ Another New York City GOP observer implored the administration, “As you probably know, thousands of Porto Ricans have settled in this City. They are, of course, citizens, and after being here one year, have the right to vote. For some reason, which many of us have been unable to fathom, an impression has gone forth amongst them that nothing has been done to alleviate the conditions in Porto Rico caused by the recent tornado.”⁴⁶

Given the administration’s belief that the Resident Commissioner represented Hoover as a Beverley appointee, and thus as a Republican, talk of political retribution abounded. Krueger noted, “Something ought to be done with Pesquera ... who should be severely called to account for his activities here in the Democratic campaign.”⁴⁷

The White House made good on the threat, authorizing Krueger to “make a suggestion to this Commissioner as to whether he had considered that his appointment came from Governor Beverley and that his misrepresentations of the President’s action and position might be very embarrassing to the Governor.”⁴⁸ Krueger allegedly confronted Pesquera, pressuring him to desist and asserting that his criticism “was an untruth and a serious reflection on the President, who, he knows, has done a lot for the Puerto Ricans in the past two years.”⁴⁹

Working with Governor Beverley, Pesquera continued to pressure the Hoover administration, primarily because both politicians faced enormous pressure from Puerto Ricans to act. George Van Horn Moseley, a War Department official, met with Pesquera to discuss the issue and later paraphrased the Resident Commissioner’s response as, “You must realize that I am the Resident Commissioner and this request has been made on me, and it is up to me to produce.”⁵⁰ On October 3, Pesquera met with officials from the Emergency Relief Division of the RFC to follow up on a request made by Governor Beverley for a \$5 million loan toward immediate relief under Title

I of the federal organization’s founding legislation.⁵¹ The meeting ended poorly for Pesquera. Though he requested funds through various provisions of the act, RFC officials claimed the organization was not designed to provide relief from natural disasters and demanded to know precisely how many people had been affected and how much money was needed before drawing any permanent conclusions; they estimated that \$1 million would suffice for the remainder of 1932.⁵² The Puerto Ricans did not receive the supplies they requested, and on October 12, the RFC approved a meager \$750,000 relief loan.⁵³

Pesquera’s anger with the Hoover administration resulted in his official endorsement of Roosevelt in the presidential election on November 3, and he encouraged Puerto Ricans living in New York to vote accordingly. “I believe we need a Democratic victory to ensure full recognition of the rights we Puerto Ricans have as American citizens,” he told *El mundo*. “We have not received the recognition from the Republican administration and the stance of the War Department as regards sending materials to aid the victims of the last storm shows we cannot hold out hope that the Republican administration will cooperate with us, not even for humanitarian reasons.”⁵⁴ He also spoke freely about local politics. When Santiago Iglesias secured the Coalición’s nomination for Resident Commissioner, Pesquera published a statement attacking this decision, arguing that Iglesias’s nominally “red” ties would be harmful to the island’s cause in Washington.⁵⁵ “If the Republican Union Party has decided not to choose a man from within its own ranks but rather one from within the Socialist Party to hold Puerto Rico’s only representative office in the U.S. Congress,” Pesquera said, “it is obvious that the Republican Union [Party] will not have a chance to maintain its principles in Washington, because it has surrendered that privilege to the Socialist Party.” He concluded, “And if this is not surrender, let God be the judge.”⁵⁶

After the Coalición handily won a majority in the election, elevating Iglesias to Resident Commissioner, Pesquera returned to his law practice and agricultural pursuits in Bayamón, where he died on July 25, 1950.



FOR FURTHER READING

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, “José Lorenzo Pesquera,” <http://bioguide.congress.gov>.

NOTES

- 1 Several other Resident Commissioners were appointed to the U.S. House. Appointments from Puerto Rico to fill vacancies are permitted under the Jones Act of 1917 (39 Stat. 964). The following Resident Commissioners were also appointed to their first term: Quintin Paredes of the Philippines (1935), Joaquin Elizalde of the Philippines (1938), Bolívar Pagán of Puerto Rico (1939), Carlos Romulo of the Philippines (1944), Antonio Fernós-Isern of Puerto Rico (1946), and Antonio Colorado of Puerto Rico (1992).
- 2 “Pero debo consignar mi especial reconocimiento a los buenos agricultores... quienes, sin distinción de matices políticos fueron los iniciadores del movimiento de opinión que se verificó en mi favor ... Si ... realizaré todos aquellos esfuerzos de que sea capaz para hacerme digno del honor que se me ha confiado y de la confianza que en mi se ha depositado por todos.” “Si el senado aprueba mi nombramiento realizaré todos aquellos esfuerzos,” 15 April 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 1. Translated as “If the Senate Approves My Appointment I Will Make Every Effort” by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010).
- 3 Pesquera had at least one brother, Mariano R. Pesquera. See Ansel Wold to Marino [*sic*] R. Pesquera, 12 September 1947, textual files of the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives (hereinafter referred to as textual files of the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*); Mariano R. Pesquera to Ansel Wold, 2 October 1947, textual files of the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*.
- 4 “Don José L. Pesquera falleció el martes en ciudad Bayamón,” 27 July 1950, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 12. Pesquera’s obituary does not mention any children.
- 5 For more information on the Puerto Rican Republican Party, see Robert J. Alexander, ed., *Political Parties of the Americas: Canada, Latin America, and the West Indies*, The Greenwood Historical Encyclopedia of the World’s Political Parties (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982): 621–622. Discussion on the Puerto Rican political party’s ties with mainland Republicans and Democrats can be found in Gonzalo F. Córdova, *Resident Commissioner Santiago Iglesias and His Times* (Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1993): 239–240.
- 6 “Si el senado aprueba mi nombramiento realizaré todos aquellos esfuerzos”; Jose E. Rios, “The Office of Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico,” (M.A. thesis, Georgetown University, 9 May 1969): 83. For the Agricultural Association’s activities, see, for example, “Porto Rican’s Dispute with Land Bank Ends,” 5 September 1931, *Baltimore Sun*: 2; “Mexico May Join the League of Nations,” 5 September 1931, *Washington Post*: 2; “El senado considerará esta tarde la designación del ldo. José L. Pesquera para comisionado residente,” 15 April 1932, *La correspondencia* (San Juan, PR): 1.
- 7 Truman R. Clark, *Puerto Rico and the United States: 1917–1933* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975): 158; César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007): 59, see also the chart on p. 143; Córdova, *Resident Commissioner Santiago Iglesias and His Times*: 235, 242–246.
- 8 The Jones Act permits the governor to appoint the Resident Commissioner to fill a vacancy with the advice and consent of the Puerto Rican senate. See Act of March 2, 1917, 39 Stat. 964.
- 9 “La función del Gobernador de Puerto Rico, en buena ética de gobierno, considerada la naturaleza política del cargo de Comisionado Residente, se reduce a mi modo de ver, a cumplir el deber ministerial de cubrir la vacante ocasionada por la renuncia del funcionario que el pueblo eligiera designado al candidato merecedor de la confianza del partido de la mayoría” [“Cuevas Zequeira retira su nombre de la terna,” 14 April 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 1. Translated as “Cuevas Zequeira Withdraws His Name from the Slate” by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010)]; Rafael Rivera Santiago, “El ldo. José L. Pesquera debe renunciar,” 13 September 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR); Cordova, *Resident Commissioner Santiago Iglesias and His Times*, 234–235.
- 10 Córdova, *Resident Commissioner Santiago Iglesias and His Times*, 234; “Y de la terna que se le envió, seleccionó al menos, políticos de los candidatos políticos que le fueron sometidos: Al Lede, Pesquera.” Rafael Rivera Santiago, “El ldo. José L. Pesquera debe renunciar.” Translated as “José L. Pesquera Should Resign” by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010).
- 11 “Pesquera fue confirmado esta madrugada por el senado,” 16 April 1932, *La correspondencia* (San Juan, PR): 1.
- 12 “El senado confirm ayer el nombramiento de Pesquera,” 17 April 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 1.
- 13 “[D]esde este momento [Pesquera] dejará de ser el Presidente de la Asociación de Agricultores para convertirse en el defensor de todos los intereses del país en el Congreso Americano. Allí defenderá los intereses Agrícolas con el mismo calor que defenderá los intereses obreros y todos los demás intereses de Puerto Rico.” “Pesquera fue confirmado esta madrugada por el senado.” Translated as “The Senate Confirmed Pesquera This Morning” by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010).
- 14 “Gets Washington Post,” 17 April 1932, *New York Times*: 6; “Pesquera fue confirmado esta madrugada por el senado;” Santiago, “El ldo. José L. Pesquera debe renunciar.” For evidence of Pesquera’s broad support throughout the island, especially from the Puerto Rican Republicans, see, for example, Luis Herrera, “La liga de asociaciones de dirige al Partido Union Republicana,” 25 April 1932, *La correspondencia* (San Juan, PR): 1; P. H. Behr, “El Coronel



- Behr le dirige una expresiva carta,” 26 April 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 1.
- 15 “Mi más caro anhelo [illegible] gestionar la legislación más provechosa para el país y a conseguir ese fin consagraré en el Norte todas mis actividades.” “Dice el Comisionado Residente,” 21 April 1932, *La correspondencia* (San Juan, PR): 1. Translated as “Resident Commissioner Says” by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010).
- 16 *Congressional Record*, House, 72nd Cong., 1st sess. (28 April 1932): 9142.
- 17 “Gets Washington Post,” 17 April 1932, *New York Times*: 6. It is unclear why Pesquera did not claim Union Republican affiliation while serving in Congress. The fluctuating party divisions in Puerto Rico at the time may have precluded his claiming an official affiliation.
- 18 There is no documentation that Pesquera was assigned committees. However, he appears in the roster for the Insular Affairs Committee as an Independent Member in 1932 and as a Republican Member in 1933. See, for example, Hearing before the House Insular Affairs Committee, *Provide a Government for American Samoa*, 72nd Cong., 1st sess. (20 and 22 May 1932): II; Hearing before the House Insular Affairs Committee, *Provide a Civil Government for the Virgin Islands of the United States*, 72nd Cong., 2nd sess. (19, 20, 21 January 1933): II.
- 19 Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century*: 95.
- 20 Robert David Johnson, “Anti-Imperialism and the Good Neighbour Policy: Ernest Gruening and Puerto Rican Affairs, 1934–1939,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 29, no. 1 (February 1997): 95; Clark, *Puerto Rico and the United States, 1917–1933*: 106.
- 21 Truman R. Clark, “Prohibition in Puerto Rico, 1917–1933,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, no. 1 (February 1995): 81, 85–86, 95.
- 22 “La Prohibición ... es un problema de hondas implicaciones económicas y morales para nuestro pueblo.... En cuanto a lo que representa la Prohibición en las finanzas públicas insulares, baste decir que con los ingresos que antes percibíamos por concepto de rentas internas y otros tributos sobre la importación y venta de licores, tendríamos bastante para equilibrar perfectamente nuestro presupuesto, para libertar de algunas de sus cargas a los agricultores y comerciantes del país y para perseverar en la construcción de obras públicas que diesen fe de nuestro afán de progreso y de confort.... [N]uestro derecho a redactar nuestros reglamentos internos en materia de Prohibición. Esto sería perfectamente legal si tenemos en cuenta que es la Ley Volstead la que rige en nuestra isla y no la enmienda dieciocho de la Constitución nacional.” “Los planes que se propone desarrollar Pesquera,” 22 April 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 1. Translated as “Plans That Pesquera Proposes to Undertake” by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010).
- 23 “Creo que el establecimiento de una zona franca en Puerto Rico daría un impulso extraordinario a nuestra vida económica; no solamente por la vida financiera que ello traería a nuestra isla, ... sino también porque nos daría las ventajas extraordinarias de adquirir... nuestras necesidades en numerosos productos a precios de la extrema competencia entre las industrias mundiales.” (“Los planes que se propone desarrollar Pesquera.”)
- 24 *Congressional Record*, House, 72nd Cong., 1st sess. (11 May 1932): 10030.
- 25 To change the name of the island of “Porto Rico” to “Puerto Rico,” Public Law 72-20.
- 26 “Los planes que se propone desarrollar Pesquera.”
- 27 David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 84–85.
- 28 H.R. 11988, *Congressional Record*, House, 72nd Cong., 1st sess. (10 May 1932): 9966–9967.
- 29 *Congressional Record*, House, 72nd Cong., 1st sess. (10 June 1932): 12624.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 12625.
- 31 Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 82–83; 47 Stat. 725.
- 32 “Ellos forman la legión anónima de ciudadanos conscientes cuyo partidismo político no está tenido de fanatismos elegos ni de apasionamientos ridículos ... y cuyo sincero amor al suelo patrio no se empolla en cerebros turbados por el hambre o por el miedo y cuyo pan nuestro de cada día no depende del resultado de las elecciones.... [José L. Pesquera, siendo] el lógico e indiscutible representante a Washington por el próximo término y debiendo ser enviado allí no por un partido solo, sino por el pueblo entero de Puerto Rico en unión.” Rafael Arroyo Zeppenfeldt, “José L. Pesquera: El hombre del destino,” 9 September 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 5. Translated as “José L. Pesquera: The Man of the Hour” by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010).
- 33 Córdova, *Resident Commissioner Santiago Iglesias and His Times*, 247; “La asamblea de la Asociación de Agricultores acordó gestionar ‘Cómo un acto reivindicador que el nombre del Sr. José L. Pesquera sea en cualquier forma postulado para el cargo de Comisionado Residente en Washington,’” 12 September 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 6. “El Comisionado Residente don José L. Pesquera se retira del Partido Republicano,” 12 September 1932, *La democracia* (San Juan, PR): 1.
- 34 J. Córdova Chirino, “La vanidad del Sr. Pesquera,” 13 September 1932, *La correspondencia* (San Juan, PR): 4; Santiago, “El ldo. José L. Pesquera debe renunciar.”
- 35 “Pesquera ha pretendido sacrificar la causa de los agricultores a su ambición descabellada y delirante de continuar en la silla de Comisionado Residente.” “Pesquera y Landron le han dado un cuartelazo,” 13 September 1932, *El Mundo* (San Juan, PR):



1. Translated as “Pesquera and Landron Have Risen Up” by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010).
- 36 “Pesquera hubiera perdido probablemente un mes en andar por las calles de Washington buscando las oficinas del gobierno.” Rafael Martínez Nadal, “El Sr. Pesquera es el que menor participación tiene,” 17 September 1932, *El Mundo* (San Juan, PR): 1. Translated as “Mr. Pesquera Has Had the Least Involvement” by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010).
- 37 Harwood Hull, “Puerto Rico Facing Doubtful Election,” 18 September 1932, *New York Times*: E8; “La asamblea de la asociación de agricultores acordó gestionar ‘cómo un acto reivindicador que el nombre del Sr. José L. Pesquera sea en cualquier forma postulado para el cargo de Comisionado Residente en Washington,” 12 September 1932, *El mundo*: 6.
- 38 W. J. Humphreys, “West Indian Hurricanes of August and September, 1932,” Volume 60 (9), *Monthly Weather Review* (1932): 178, <http://ams.allenpress.com/perlserv/?request=get-toc&issn=1520-0493&volume=60&issue=9> (accessed 24 March 2010).
- 39 “Ask Relief at Once for Puerto Ricans,” 2 October 1932, *New York Times*: 27; “Estoy preparando y a el terreno todos tienen los mejores deseos,” 3 October 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 3.
- 40 “Desalentadora” [“Las gestiones que hicieron Beverley y Pesquera”], 13 October 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 1; Appendix E - The President’s Calendar, 1 October 1932, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Herbert Hoover* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977): 1235. Though references to and summaries of the memorandum exist, the document itself was not archived. See, for example, Lawrence Richey to Hon. Patrick H. Hurley, 1 October 1932; Presidential States File; Puerto Rico, General Correspondence; Herbert Hoover Papers; Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, IA (hereinafter referred to as Presidential States File, Hoover Library). Other correspondence between Pesquera and President Hoover and Pesquera and Secretary of War Patrick L. Hurley was reprinted in *El mundo*. See, for example, “Pesquera se dirige nuevamente al Presidente y al Secretario de la Guerra,” 4 October 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 2.
- 41 “Sharp Criticism to Government’s Indifference to Pto. Rico’s Distress,” 8 October 1932, *El universal* (English section): 1; “La actitud de la administración estan desconcertante como despiadada,” 12 October 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 2.
- 42 “Sharp Criticism to Government’s Indifference to Pto. Rico’s Distress.”
- 43 See, for example, James J. Lanzetta to Herbert Hoover, telegram, 28 September 1932, Presidential States File, Hoover Library; United Puerto Rico Republican Club (New York, NY) to Hoover, telegram, 7 October 1932, Presidential States File, Hoover Library.
- 44 Clark, *Puerto Rico and the United States: 1917–1933*: 156–157; J. W. Krueger to Lawrence Richey, 11 October 1932; Presidential States File, Hoover Library.
- 45 J. W. Krueger to Walter H. Newton, 31 October 1932; Presidential States File, Hoover Library; Krueger to Newton, 20 October 1932; Presidential States File, Hoover Library. Krueger appends a newspaper article confirming Pesquera’s presence at a New York meeting of the Spanish American Citizens Democratic Club. See, Nickols, “Political Briefs,” 29 October 1932, *El universal* (English section): 1.
- 46 Isaac Seigel to Walter H. Newton, 20 October 1932; Presidential States File, Hoover Library.
- 47 J. W. Krueger to Lawrence Richey, 20 October 1932; Presidential States File, Hoover Library.
- 48 Walter H. Newton to J. W. Krueger, 2 November 1932; Presidential States File, Hoover Library.
- 49 Krueger to Newton, 31 October 1932; Presidential States File, Hoover Library.
- 50 George Van Horn Moseley to Walter H. Newton, 19 October 1932; Presidential States File, Hoover Library.
- 51 Beverley’s request is recorded in “Chronological Record of Action Taken by the Bureau of Insular Affairs and Puerto Rican Authorities Re Hurricane of September 27, 1932,” File 856-121, General Classified Files, 1898–1945, General Records Relating to More Than One Island Possession, Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, Record Group 350, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD (hereinafter referred to as RG 350, NACP): 7.
- 52 Edward A. Stockton, Jr., “Memorandum for Records,” 3 October 1932, File 856-121, RG 350, NACP; Stockton, “Memorandum for Records,” 4 October 1932, File 856-121, RG 350, NACP.
- 53 Short to Beverley, telegram, 1 October 1932, File 856-121, RG 350, NACP; “El gobernador no solo ha estado ocupandose de nuestra suerte,” 17 October 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 1. The Puerto Rican senate eventually rejected some of the Reconstruction Finance money because the Liberal Party did not support the payment structure. See “Cablegrams que se cruzaron el viernes ultimo,” 24 October 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 2; “Considero cruel la actitud de la minoria Liberal,” 26 October 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 1; “Pesquera formó un juicio sin datos sobre la situación,” 27 October 1932, *La democracia* (San Juan, PR): 1; “La mayoría demuestra haber puesto el interes partidista,” 3 November 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 1.
- 54 “No hemos tenido ese reconocimiento de parte de la administración republicana y la actitud del Departamento de la Guerra en lo que respecta al envío de materiales para ayudar a las víctimas del último temporal demuestra que no podemos abrigar esperanzas de que



la administración republicana coopere con nosotros, ni aún por humanidad.” “Se necesita un triunfo Demócrata para asegurar el pleno reconocimiento,” 3 November 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 3. Translated as “Democrat Victory Needed to Ensure Full Recognition” by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010).

- 55 Harwood Hull, “Puerto Rico Facing Doubtful Election,” 18 September 1932, *New York Times*: E8; “El mantenimiento de los principios de la Unión Republicana esta vinculado,” 10 September 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 1.
- 56 “Si la Unión Republicana no ha querido escoger de su seno un hombre, sino que lo ha escogido del seno del Partido Socialista, para que ostente la única representación de Puerto Rico en el Congreso de los Estados Unidos, es obvio que la Unión Republicana no tendrá oportunidad de mantener sus principios en Washington, puesto que le ha cedido al Partido Socialista el privilegio de mantener los suyos. Y si esto no es rendición que venga Dios y lo vea.” “El mantenimiento de los principios de la Unión Republicana está vinculado,” 10 September 1932, *El mundo* (San Juan, PR): 1. Translated as “Maintaining the Principles of the Republican Union Is Linked” by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010).