



## **NPRC TO DIAGEO: PUERTO RICO ISN'T A "SPECIAL INTEREST"**

***"We're not a 'front group'" – but thanks for acknowledging our leadership!***

**WASHINGTON, DC (February 23)** – The National Puerto Rican Coalition has responded to today's extraordinary 13-page, 5,700-word news release by the British liquor conglomerate Diageo, in which the manufacturer of Captain Morgan Rum defended its role in receiving \$2.7 billion in federal excise taxes that Puerto Rico had been counting on to meet its social needs (<http://tinyurl.com/ygpxgut>). The Diageo statement alleged a conspiracy of "front groups," "self-interested constituents" and two Puerto Rican rum companies which Diageo claims are trying to "drive" Diageo "out of the United States."

NPRC Chairman Miguel Lausell, (who was criticized by Diageo for exercising his Constitutional rights to support Puerto Rico native Maurice Ferre for the Senate in Florida), issued the following statement: "Puerto Rico isn't a 'special interest' nor is the National Puerto Rican Coalition a 'front group' -- but we appreciate Diageo's recognition of our role in shining public attention on their diversion of \$2.7 billion in U.S. tax dollars to their shareholders. Diageo's corporate lawyers may have been able to trick the U.S. Virgin Islands out of half of every dollar meant to meet their social needs, but their public relations team can't cover up facts. Diageo stands to pocket more in U.S. tax dollars than it paid for Captain Morgan in the first place, and almost twice as much as it costs them to produce their product. It's excessive, unreasonable and wrong, and even 13-page press releases can't change that."

Added NPRC President Rafael Fantauzzi: "As the voice of Puerto Ricans both on the Island and the mainland, we are proud of our role in leading the fight against this reckless and short-sighted scheme, which pits poor people against giant corporations so billions can be diverted from a place where one in three lives in poverty and one in six is out of work. Captain Morgan may have raided the Caribbean for British interests once, but those days are over: Diageo's disproportionate subsidies will be set aside, either by Congress or the World Trade Organization – or both."

The National Puerto Rican Coalition's mission is to enhance the social, political, and economic well-being of all Puerto Ricans on the mainland and the Island with a special focus on the most vulnerable.

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