

Puerto Rican Students Protest 'Illegal' Debt and Education Cuts



San Juan, May 12 (RHC)-- Striking students of the University of Puerto Rico have decided to continue their protest action indefinitely. At a general meeting on campus, students voted to maintain their strike to protest proposed education budget cuts amounting to \$450 million by 2021.

The university appeals court ordered the re-opening of the Rio Piedras campus gates and ordered administration officials from the Rio Piedras Campus to resume work on Thursday, under penalty of contempt. According to Dialogo, the university's official publication, student caucus members met in Roberto Clemente Coliseum in San Juan. The meeting, scheduled a day prior to the court appeals deadline, was held to debate whether the strike should continue indefinitely.

In order for any decision concerning an indefinite strike to be valid, a quorum of 1,624 students (10 percent of student enrollment) is required at the meeting. Otherwise, the general assembly would only be considered an informative gathering and any decision taken would not be binding.

In addition to opposing the multi-million dollar cut proposed by the unelected Fiscal Control Board with the consent of the government of Ricardo Rossello Nevares, demonstrators also demand an audit of the public debt which amounts to \$74 billion.

According to reports by the Debt Audit Commission and the ReFund America Project, roughly \$36.9

billion of Puerto Rico's debt was deemed illegal. The amount owed to creditors either involved “extra-constitutional” debt saddled with predatory interest rates or “toxic” interest rate swaps.

Bernard Tort, a UPR professor who was injured by riot police during a recent protest said, “The audit would reveal: 1) how much of the debt is illegal, 2) who is responsible for putting together the illegal bonds that were sold, and 3) who was involved in the underwriting.”

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