

Governor Ricardo Rosselló Resigns

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PRACTICE AREAS

- Government Affairs & Public Policy

An McV Government Affairs Alert

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Governor Ricardo Rosselló made public his decision to resign, effective August 2, 2019 at 5:00 pm, to his position as Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. This is the first time in the political history of Puerto Rico that an elected Governor has resigned. In accordance with Article III, section 7 of the Constitution of Puerto Rico, when there is a vacancy in the office of Governor as a result of, among other things, a resignation, the responsibility devolves “upon the Secretary of State, who shall hold it for the rest of the term;” or if said position is vacant as well “the law shall provide which of the Secretaries shall serve as Governor.” Section 1 of Act No. 7 of July 24, 1952, provides the order of succession for such circumstances. As such, the next cabinet member in the order of succession is Wanda Vázquez-Garced, as Secretary of Justice of Puerto Rico.

The resignation of Governor Rosselló will hopefully begin to put an end to the political and social turmoil that has beset the Island during the last two weeks as a result of the federal indictments against former officials of the Rosselló administration, and also, by the public disclosure of approximately 900 pages of a highly controversial cellphone chat in which the Governor and other high-level officials and advisors participated. Massive and continued protests for several days calling for the Governor to resign, plus articles of impeachment being discussed at the House of Representatives by members of his own political party, ultimately exerted enough social and political pressure that led to his inevitable departure.

This coming week the Legislature and the outgoing Governor must decide whether to fill the vacancy of Secretary of State in order to let that person finish the constitutional term of the Governor until 2020, or allow the Secretary of Justice, Wanda Vázquez-Garced, to step up and become the Governor for the remaining 17 months. They must also address in the coming days and weeks the important issues dealing with the government’s credibility in Washington, DC, as they embark in this new political scenario while they continue to deal with the ongoing fiscal and economic crisis, the existence and interplay of the Federal Oversight and Management Board and of PROMESA, plus the billions of dollars in federal disaster recovery assistance funds which have yet to be distributed.

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We will continue to monitor this ongoing political situation and will update you periodically as events unfold in the coming days and weeks.

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