

(H. B. 1645)

(No. 51-2015)

(Approved April 17, 2015)

AN ACT

To designate the Adams Second Unit School, located at km 122.0 of State Road PR-2 in the Caimital Alto Ward of the Municipality of Aguadilla, as the “Conchita Igartúa de Suárez Second Unit School”; and to exempt such designation from the provisions of Act No. 99 of June 22, 1961, as amended, known as the “Public Structures and Highways Naming Commission of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Act”; and for other purposes.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

Mrs. Conchita Igartúa de Suárez was born in Progreso Street, at the heart of the *Leal Villa del Ojo* in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, on January 28, 1939. She was the daughter of Aguadilla native and industrialist Rafael Igartúa and Isabela native Francisca de la Rosa, who later had two more children: Rafael J. Igartúa de la Rosa and Gregorio Igartúa de la Rosa, Esq.

She completed first and second grade in Dr. Agustín Stahl Elementary School in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. She then attended Colegio San Carlos, which had been recently founded, where she finished high school with honors. She went on to St. Regis College in Weston, Massachusetts, for her freshman year, but finally earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Sacred Heart University in Santurce, specializing in Science with a major in biology and chemistry.

In 1962, she married Dr. James W. Suárez-Zavaleta. They had six children: Jaime Rafael, Conchita María, María de los Ángeles del Rosario, Rafael Alfredo, Gregorio Manuel, and Miguel Francisco.

In 1972, after entering politics in Aguadilla, she opened a new chapter in the political history of that town, opening doors and making way for Puerto Rican women, and at the age of 33 years being elected as the first and, thus far, only female mayor of Aguadilla. Her work in office included the construction of many roads, the installation of water pipes in communities that lacked running water, and the cleanup of isolated areas and hills in Aguadilla. She ordered the construction of stairs with handrails to go up the hills, and of the Plaza del Escudo (known today as Plaza Santiago Apóstol), as well as improvements to schools, squares, and athletic facilities such as those in San Antonio, Corrales, Caimital, Barrio Palmar, Barriada Esteves, and Camaseyes, with multiple service centers. She also ordered the construction of the dispensary in San Antonio, four nursing homes, the fishing boat project, and the Fishermen Education and Help Center. She was also responsible for the construction of the parking lot at Playuela, which included a building for bathrooms, showers, and lighting. She further coordinated through the Department of Housing and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and succeeded in providing the greatest distribution of parcels of land in the history of our towns, which included streets, sidewalks, water, and electricity service. A total of eight hundred parcels of land were distributed in Barriada Cabán and in Guerrero Ward. Looking after the needs of the population, she also ensured the construction of the Muñecas Public Housing Project, the Muñeki I Building, and the Jardines de Maribel housing development.

While she was mayor, a Diagnostic and Treatment Center was also built in Higüey Ward, which served the citizens of Aguadilla for many years with medical and nursing personnel, ambulances and their drivers available 24 hours. Furthermore, Mrs. Igartúa sought state and federal funding to build the Dr. Pedro Zamora New Regional Hospital of Aguadilla (currently known as Buen Samaritano Hospital), which has provided countless services to the Northwestern Region.

As mayor, she also held and founded the Rafael Hernández Music Festival in coordination with the Puerto Rico Chamber of Commerce, Peer International, and the Cultural Center, to which she entrusted the festival so it could become a town tradition.

Mrs. Igartúa de Suárez, together with Governor Rafael Hernández-Colón and Resident Commissioner, The Hon. Jaime Benítez, requested the United States Government to transfer Ramey Air Base to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. New York Congressman, The Hon. Otis Pike, invited her to attend the public hearing to be held in Washington, D.C. – and which he would preside over – related to the transfer of the Base lands. The day of the hearing, on January 28, 1974, the transfer of such lands to Puerto Rico was approved. The historic news of the transfer of the Base grounds to Puerto Rico was announced to the people of Aguadilla by means of a phone call from the Office of the Resident Commissioner, The Hon. Jaime Benítez, and through Aguadilla Radio. Mrs. Igartúa de Suárez, as member of the Steering Committee on the Development of Ramey Base, contributed to the swift implementation of the use and improvement plans in order to prevent the deterioration of the facilities as had happened with other facilities in the United States.

She belonged to the U.S. Mayors League and the Governor's Advisory Committee on Human Resources. She was treasurer of the Puerto Rico Mayors Association for four years and member of the Advisory Committee to the President of Sacred Heart University, which institution honored her as one of the four most distinguished alumni in its forty-year history. She was named 1975 Outstanding Woman of the Year in Government by the Puerto Rico Chamber of Commerce, and honored by the *Aguadillanos Ausentes* of the New York Council, presided by *Don* Raúl Enchautegui. Moreover, she received an award from The Hon. Abraham Beame, Mayor of New York, and the Deputy Mayor of the City of Newark, The

Hon. Ramón Añeses gave her a key to that city. As mayor, Mrs. Igartúa de Suárez received recognition for labor relations, her contributions to sports, and others. In view of her close connections in Washington, D.C., she established the first Office of Federal Funds in Aguadilla which, by means of matching funds, allowed to carry out capital improvements that still provide services to the townspeople.

Understanding that politics is “The Art of Governance,” she never supported or engaged in cheap politics, respecting her opponents and recognizing the right of every citizen to exercise democracy. She provided many people with job opportunities, including many supporters of other political parties who still remain grateful for such opportunity, attesting thereto. With children and youth in mind, she fostered sports by appointing recreational and sports leaders to teach basketball, baseball, track and field, golf, boxing, and introduce the sport of soccer. Furthermore, she held the first International Weightlifting Competition at Ramey’s Gymnasium.

In 2008, her husband Jaime, known as the doctor to the poor, passed away after serving the people of Aguadilla for 47 years. He was her refuge and loyal supporter. Mrs. Igartúa de Suárez has participated in civic and religious organizations, serving as a Eucharistic Minister since 1981 and as part of the Catholic Daughters of America. Furthermore, she has been a member of the Schoenstatt Apostolic Movement for 30 years.

Conchita Igartúa de Suárez served as Municipal Director of Health, which included the Diagnostic and Treatment Center in Higüey Ward, the one in San Antonio, and the four Municipal Elderly Centers. She also served as Deputy Director and Director of the Aguadilla Regional Office of the Right to Work Administration.

At the age of 73, she feels satisfied with all her undertakings and with having completed a historic feat as a woman of Aguadilla by her beloved *Patria Chica* (Little Homeland). She is grateful for all the blessings she has received, the

opportunities provided to her and her loved ones, the unforgettable experiences that have enriched her life, the people she has known and whom she remembers kindly, and the love of her children and her devoted late husband.

For such reason, this Legislative Assembly, recognizing the great work and contribution of Mrs. Conchita Igartúa de Suárez, deems it meritorious to pay deserving homage to her by naming the Adams Second Unit School after her. Thus, future generations will learn of her legacy and work in our beloved city of Aguadilla.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1. – The Adams Second Unit School, located in the Municipality of Aguadilla, is hereby designated as the “Conchita Igartúa de Suárez Second Unit School.”

Section 2. – The Department of Education is hereby directed to immediately change the name of the Adams Second Unit School in Aguadilla to the “Conchita Igartúa de Suárez Second Unit School,” and to use such name in all related Department documentation. Coordination with the school’s director shall take place so as to modify the signage thereof according to the provisions of Section 1 of this Act.

Section 3. – The Public Structures and Highways Naming Commission of the Government of Puerto Rico shall take the necessary measures to comply with the provisions of this Act without being subject to the provisions of Act No. 99 of June 22, 1961, as amended, known as the “Public Structures and Highways Naming Commission of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Act.”

Section 4. – The costs to be incurred in the school sign required under Section 2 of this Act may be defrayed with private, municipal, state, or federal contributions.

Section 5. – This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following **Act No. 51-2015 (H. B. 1645)** of the **5th Regular Session** of the **17th Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico**:

AN ACT to designate the Adams Second Unit School, located at km 122.0 of State Road PR-2 in the Caimital Alto Ward of the Municipality of Aguadilla, as the "Conchita Igartúa de Suárez Second Unit School"; and to exempt such designation from the provisions of Act No. 99 of June 22, 1961, as amended, known as the "Public Structures and Highways Naming Commission of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Act"; and for other purposes.

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

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, on this 14th day of November, 2017.

Orlando Pagán-Ramírez
Acting Director