

Setik Returns With Little News

SAIPAN (COM) — The fate of several important projects and programs which are part of 1974 and 1975 Trust Territory budget requests to the U.S. Congress now awaits final action by the congress, according to Rep. Ray Setik of Truk who returned to Saipan from Washington Monday.

Setik, who chairs the Congress of Micronesia's Joint Committee on Program and Budget Planning, accompanied the High Commissioner to Washington to support requests for the Trust Territory from the U.S. Congress.

The Truk congressman noted that Sen. Bailey Olter, vice-chairman of the joint committee, had appeared before the house subcommittee on appropriations March 14 in support of a supplemental appropriation for 1974 which

included extra money for added costs to the planned Ponape referral hospital and added fuel costs for operations of the Trust Territory.

Setik then travelled to Washington to testify before the Senate subcommittee on appropriations hearing on the same request on March 28. He noted that the original money requested by the IT included funds for the Ponape hospital, fuel cost increases and money for a second new field trip ship. But when both he and Sen. Olter appeared, they found that the money for the ship had been deleted by President Nixon's Office of Management and Budget before the appropriations request was submitted to the house and senate subcommittees.

According to Setik, he made a request for a ship costing about \$1.6 million before Sen. Bible's Senate committee, but the response from Bible was that such an item did not belong in a supplemental request which should be for emergency and unexpected expenses. He counseled the Truk congressman that such a request should be included in the regular 1975

appropriation due to be heard in the House April 2, and in the Senate on April 3.

However, this would have been impossible, according to Setik, because money which was included in the 1975 budget for a ship, for making the Truk airfield longer and for other capital improvement projects, had been switched in Washington after the Congress of Micronesia's review. This money, he said, had been shifted to an accelerated land cadaster program at the request of the Office of Micronesian Status Negotiations. Therefore, there was no money for a second ship in 1974. And there was no money in the 1975 budget either, since it was already up to the \$60 million ceiling.

"This would mean," Setik said, "that it might be 1976 before another ship could be funded, and about 1978 before it could be delivered. We would then have to wait for about four years for a second ship to replace some of the old World War II vessels we must put up with now."

He added that the High Commissioner and the

Department of the Interior were hopeful that a new budget ceiling of \$75 million would be approved for 1975 and that new ships and other projects could be included this year if that came about.

"However," Setik said, "even though this has the approval of the Department of the Interior, there is no guarantee that the amount will be approved by the Office of Management and Budget."

"Therefore," he continued, "we decided to make a very strong request that money for the ship be included in the 1974 supplemental, noting that the amount of \$1.6 million which was still available under the \$60 million ceiling for 1974 was just enough to fund the ship."

Setik said that before his presentation to the house subcommittee chairman, Rep. Julia Butler Hansen, he handed her a letter which explained this position. Mrs. Hansen read the letter into the record during the hearing and said that while it was too late for the House committee to take action, if the Senate committee wished, it still had time to include this in the appropriation. If the Senate did

this, she related, the house committee would go along with the change, Setik said.

The Truk representative said he also sent a copy of his letter to Sen. Bible and brought up the subject during the hearing on FY 1975 in the Senate.

"While we have not heard yet the fate of the money for the ship, we do know that Sen. Bible's staff asked for more information about it and we are hopeful that it can be included," Setik said.

Rep. Setik noted that Sen. Bible was retiring from the Senate after 20 years and that this would be his last year. Similarly, Mrs. Hansen, who chairs the house subcommittee, and Wendell Wyatt, a longtime member, would also not return to the 94th congress.

Consequently, he concluded his remarks before both subcommittees thanking the chairmen for their understanding and efforts for the people of Micronesia. Both chairmen were also presented with gifts of Micronesian handicrafts, and all were given a standing invitation to visit Micronesia in the future to meet the people and see the islands.