

Separate Status Talks For Marshall Islands

MAJURO (MNS) -- The Marshall Islands District Legislature (Nitijela) status commission bill became law Tuesday in ceremonies at the office of District Administrator Oscar Debrum in Majuro.

The bill amends a previous district law to immediately establish the Marshall Islands Political Status Commission and paves the way for the district to begin serious consideration of the possibility that the Marshalls can enter direct negotiations with the United States on the future status question. District leaders have indicated they wish these negotiations.

In the final version of the bill

signed into law this week, the number of people to serve on the commission was reduced from 18 to eight. Four members would be appointed by the speaker of the Nitijela; two would be appointed by the district administrator and two would come from the Marshalls delegation to the Congress of Micronesia.

As he signed the bill, Debrum remarked that the day would be an historic one for the Marshall Islands, "marking an important step in the endeavors to meet the will of the people and fulfill their aspirations."

The traditional Iroij leaders of the Marshalls were at the

ceremonies, led by Iroij Kabua Kabua, who is also the presiding judge in the district court. Nitijela Speaker Atlan Anien headed elected leaders of the legislature and Congress of Micronesia Sen. Wilfred Kendall and Rep. A taji Batos also

were present. Iroij Lofelan Kabua said of the signing, "This marks the emergence of the people of the Marshalls from a state of weakness that had permeated the early days of our development." He said he had

been moved by the remarks delivered by district leaders at the opening of the Nitijela session earlier this month and said that the Marshalls now has the means to achieve a future which coincides with the wishes of the people.