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DRAFT PROCLAMATION BY THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

WHEREAS on February 15, 1975 the Marianas Political Status Commission and the Personal Representative of the President of the United States signed a Covenant which if approved by the people of the Mariana Islands District and the Congress of the United States, would establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America; and

WHEREAS this signing marked the conclusion of negotiations between the two parties pursuant to more than twenty years of efforts by the people of the Northern Mariana Islands through public petition and referendum to achieve political union with the United States; and

WHEREAS the Covenant was unanimously approved on February 20, 1975 by the Marianas District Legislature; and

WHEREAS by Resolution No. 126-1975 the Marianas District Legislature on February 28, 1975 formally requested the United States as Administering Authority, of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands to set a date for and call a plebiscite in the Mariana Islands District relative to the Covenant;

NOW THEREFORE, I, Rogers C.B. Morton, Secretary of the Interior, by virtue of the powers vested in me under Executive Order 11021 of July 1, 1962, do hereby call for a plebiscite to be held on Tuesday, June 17, 1975 throughout the Mariana Islands District to provide an opportunity for the people of the Northern Mariana Islands to exercise their right of self-determination under the Trusteeship Agreement of July 18, 1947 between the United Nations and the United States of America.

The plebiscite will be held in a fair and impartial manner under the supervision of a Plebiscite Commissioner appointed by the President.

The ballot to be presented in the plebiscite shall be as follows:

Yes - I vote for Commonwealth as set forth in the Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America.

No - I vote against Commonwealth as set forth in the Covenant recognizing that, if Commonwealth is rejected, the Northern Mariana Islands will remain with the other districts of the Trust Territory and participate with them in determining (its) (another) future political status.

In recognition of the historic importance of this act of self-determination, I declare that the day of the plebiscite shall be a public holiday in the Mariana Islands District.

Observers from the United Nations and the Congress of the United States would be welcome to witness the plebiscite as well as the Plebiscite Education Program, the registration of voters, and other pre-plebiscite activities. Members of the U.S. Congress would also be welcome. Such observers will be accorded all possible facilities.

I have today issued Secretarial Order No. _____ which defines the authority and procedures for holding the plebiscite for the Mariana Islands District in accordance with the responsibility of the United States as Administering Authority.

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