

Ponape Bill For Full-Time Legislators OKd

PONAPE (MNS) — The Ponape District Legislature has passed a comprehensive salary bill for full-time legislators.

By a 19-4 vote, legislators approved an annual salary of \$6,000 for members and \$7,000 for the speaker.

Although legislative officers expressed optimism that Ponape District Administrator Leo A. Falcam would approve the bill, Deputy Distad Berm

Wellbacher said the administration's response probably will be "negative."

"The chances of this bill being inked into law are no good," Weilbacher said. "This is not definite, but that is the way it looks now," he added.

Although Weilbacher wouldn't offer specific reasons, it was indicated that the administration considers the salary figures too high.

Falcam was on Saipan

unavailable for comment.

Just minutes before the bill came up for the final vote late Thursday afternoon, the administration proposed a compromise salary of \$5,000 for members and \$6,000 for the speaker. This proposal came one week after it was promised to the legislature, according to Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kasiano Joseph.

The new salary package is the second to be passed by the

legislature. A previous measure failed to get Falcam's signature because he felt that the district does not have sufficient funds.

Early in the current session, the Ways and Means Committee cut \$20 daily meeting allowances in half. Later, legislators dropped allowances entirely, hoping to make the bill more palatable to the administration.

The committee justified the new salary levels in a lengthy

report to the legislature, saying that as full-time legislators they will be restricted from holding government jobs and that the new "full-time status will bring with it an increased burden of responsibility for directing the political and economic future of Ponape District.

If approved by Falcam, the bill will take effect Jan. 3, 1976, two days after the legislature becomes a full-time lawmaking body.

