

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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SECRETARY MORTON ACTS TO AUTHORIZE PLEBISCITE
IN THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS FOR JUNE 17, 1975

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton today issued a Proclamation calling for a plebiscite to be held on Tuesday, June 17, 1975, in order that the people of the Northern Mariana Islands, presently administered as a part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, may decide whether they wish to become a Commonwealth of the United States. The islands, including Saipan, Tinian, Rota and others, lie north of the U.S. Territory of Guam.

On February 15, 1975, the Marianas Political Status Commission and the President's Personal Representative, Ambassador Haydn Williams, signed a Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America. The Covenant calls for the holding of such a plebiscite. If the Covenant is approved by the people of the Mariana Islands District and subsequently the Congress of the United States, the Northern Mariana Islands would become a U.S. Commonwealth.

In announcing the plebiscite Secretary Morton stated, "The plebiscite will be held in a fair and impartial manner under the supervision of a Plebiscite Commissioner. The President has designated Mr. Erwin D. Canham, to serve in that position as his Personal Representative." Secretary Morton also declared, "Observers from the United Nations and the U.S. Congress will be welcome to witness the plebiscite as well as the Plebiscite Education program, the registration of voters, and other pre-plebiscite activities."

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