

DRAFT/MSH
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Dear Senator Tenorio:

I appreciate receiving your telegram of April 23. As you know, I have long been interested in the United States-Marianas negotiations, and have made it my business to remain fully informed about the issues raised in those negotiations. I have had extended discussions with representatives of the Executive Branch and of the Marianas Commission -- including yourself -- concerning the negotiations. And I have been to the Marianas and talked to the people about their desire for United States citizenship and permanent political union with the United States of America. As an American, I am deeply honored that the people of the Marianas have such warm feelings toward our country.

Under the United States Constitution, the Executive Branch, not the Congress has the responsibility of negotiating agreements such as the Marianas Covenant. We in Congress have the responsibility of advising the Executive Branch of our views -- as we have done -- and of voting as our consciences dictate on whether or not to approve the work of the Executive Branch -- as we will when, and if, the Covenant comes before us.

Like any document designed as the basis for an on-going relationship, the Covenant reflects compromises on both sides. These compromises show that the Marianas and the United States are each prepared to accommodate the fundamental concerns

of the other. Particular issues which were negotiated -- such as the supremacy of the Covenant and the U.S. Constitution or the extraordinary powers granted to the Marianas to limit land alienation to Chamorros, Carolinians and others of Northern Marianas descent -- cannot be re-examined without calling into question the entire relationship proposed in the Covenant. In my view, Senator, the people of the Northern Marianas cannot expect to secure a commonwealth relationship with the United States on terms that differ very significantly from those their negotiators obtained in the Covenant. Indeed, the Covenant, if approved, will undoubtedly form the standard for a searching reexamination of the relationship between the United States and its other territories.

You have raised a number of specific questions about the Covenant which I am sure have already been answered by others. I want only to make the general point that under the Covenant the U.S. Congress will have the authority and the responsibility to assist the Marianas in many ways. For example, I believe the United States should pay all war claims in all of Micronesia in full. The Covenant does not deal with this matter. But there is no need for it do so, since under the Covenant, as now, Congress will be able to assure that our moral commitments are met and full payments are made.

I urge all of the people of the Northern Marianas to weigh carefully the available political status alternatives and to analyze thoughtfully the proposed Covenant before

exercising their precious right of self-determination. I will make no attempt to influence, one way or the other, the free and unfettered expression of the will of the people on this matter. I will support their decision, reached fairly and openly. If that decision is in favor of commonwealth under the Covenant, I will support the Covenant in Congress and urge my colleagues to do the same.

With best personal regards,

Sincerely,

Phillip Burton