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P.O. Box 4
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May 1, 1975

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The Honorable Rogers C.B. Morton
~~Secretary of the Interior~~
Office of the Dept. of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20525

Dear Secretary Morton:

We are concerned citizens of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, residents of the Northern Mariana Islands. We share your stated desire that the plebiscite of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands to decide whether they wish to become a Commonwealth of the United States in accordance with the terms of the Covenant signed on February 15, 1975, be held in a "fair and impartial manner."

We have brought to the attention of the plebiscite commissioner, Erwin D. Canham, grave problems with the wording of the ballot which you have prescribed for the plebiscite in your Proclamation of April 11. Mr. Canham suggested that we advise you of our concerns.

We believe that the "No" ballot contains internally inconsistent, misleading and even biased language. Unnecessary references lengthen the ballot and will confuse voters, perhaps even cause some to vote for the simpler, "Yes" ballot, as the only one they understand.

"Yes" Ballot Is Addressed To The Issue

As you know, the real issue that will face the people of the Marianas will be whether they wish to vote for or against Commonwealth in political union with the United States as set forth in the Covenant. There are many ancillary issues which may have some bearing upon how people will vote on this specific proposition. If the ballot were to be truly full and complete it might reprint the entire Covenant. You apparently agree that would be likely to confuse and distract voters. We therefore applaud your prescribed wording of the "Yes" ballot:

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.

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