

A. The Covenant Is At Issue, Not The Commonwealth Concept - Some here are for Commonwealth with the United States but disapprove of some specific terms "set forth in the Covenant."

These will be hopelessly confused by the "No" phraseology. The "Yes" ballot, and the first part of the "No", say the issue is whether the voter favors "Commonwealth as set forth in the Covenant." Under that language, most would believe a vote against this particular Covenant would not necessarily be against Commonwealth.

Yet the ballot spells out some (but of course not all) results "if Commonwealth is rejected." Since the language is in the "No" ballot, it suggests that "No" will be considered a vote against Commonwealth under any terms. This fundamental internal inconsistency makes it impossible for any voter to know, with certainty, the scope of the issue presented.

Perhaps the intended message is that, if this Covenant is rejected, the people of the Marianas will never again be given the opportunity for Commonwealth. With all due respect, we wonder whether you have the authority or the prescience to speak for the United States on this issue, forever. Even if you do it would seem preferable to communicate the message as a part of general education preparatory to the plebiscite rather than by innuendo within the ballot.

If you for some reason regard it proper and critical that the ballot communicate that a "No" vote will be considered a permanent and irrevocable vote against Commonwealth in any form, we respectfully request that the "Yes" and "No" ballots be amended to leave no doubt as to that fact.

If the ballot is not intended to carry such an implication, the words, "if Commonwealth is rejected" should be deleted altogether.

B. Northern Marianas Status As A Trust Territory District Will Not Be Changed By The Plebiscite - The "No" ballot says that, if Commonwealth is rejected, the "Northern Mariana Islands will remain as a District of the Trust Territory..." Isn't that equally true if the plebiscite vote is "Yes"? In either event, the Northern Marianas will remain a district of the Trust Territory for precisely the same time - until the Trusteeship Agreement is terminated.

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