

SALFAN, JULY 10 (UNEPRESS RELEASE)---THE SENATE PRESIDENT AND HOUSE SPEAKER OF THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA HAVE SENT DISPATCHES TO CONGRESSMAN PHILLIP BURTON RESPONDING TO HIS INVITATION TO TESTIFY CONCERNING THE MARIANAS COVENANT.

THE DISPATCHES WERE SENT TUESDAY, AND WILL ARRIVE IN WASHINGTON THE DAY OF THE HEARINGS SCHEDULED FOR JULY 14, EASTERN STANDARD TIME.

IN HIS MESSAGE, PRESIDENT NAKAYAMA THANKED BURTON FOR HIS OFFER TO APPEAR BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRITORIAL AND INSULAR AFFAIRS, BUT SAID THAT "DUE TO THE PRESS OF BUSINESS IN CONNECTION WITH THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION WHICH BEGAN ON JULY 12, I AM UNABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY IN BEHALF OF THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA."

SPEAKER BETHNEL HENRY ALSO EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE AT THE INVITATION AND REGRETS AT BEING UNABLE TO ATTEND BECAUSE OF CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND CONVENTION RELATED BUSINESS.

BOTH LEADERS STATED IN GENERAL THAT THE CONGRESS WAS ALREADY ON RECORD WITH REGARD TO THE MARIANAS SEPARATE STATUS AND ADMINISTRATION, THROUGH JOINT RESOLUTIONS OR THROUGH PUBLIC STATEMENTS AT SUCH MEETINGS AS THE UN TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL.

"FOR THE RECORD, OUR POSITION AT THIS TIME REMAINS UNCHANGED FROM THAT PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED," SAID THE PRESIDENT, ADDING, "THEREFORE, PLEASE ACCEPT MY REGRET AT BEING UNABLE TO ATTEND AND MY BEST WISHES TO ALL THOSE WHO ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE HEARINGS."

IN HIS DISPATCH, SPEAKER SAID IN CLOSING "LET ME ADD THAT DESPITE MY ABSENCE, I AM SURE THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE MARIANAS WILL BE WELL-REPRESENTED BY THOSE ATTENDING YOUR MEETING ON THIS CRUCIAL ISSUE."

(CALL USERS: PLEASE CREDIT CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA)

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FOR THE PRESENTATION BY THE MARIANAS DELEGATION FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS THEMSELVES.

REP. PHILLIP BURTON IN HIS OPENING REMARKS, CALLED THE HEARINGS ITSELF AN HISTORIC OCCASION. HE SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN "TWO INSTANCES IN THE AFFAIRS OF FREE PEOPLE" WHERE A RELATIVELY SMALL POPULATED AREA HAS DEMONSTRATED THEIR FREE CHOICE IN BECOMING A MEMBER OF A LARGER AREA.

REP. BURTON ALSO STATED THAT AS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, IT WAS HIS "DUTY AND HONOR TO RESPECT WHATEVER DECISION WAS MADE TO THE FREELY EXPRESSED DESIRE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE VARIOUS DISTRICTS OF MICRONESIA."

AMBASSADOR F. HAYDN WILLIAMS, CHIEF NEGOTIATOR FOR THE UNITED STATES DURING THE COVENANT NEGOTIATIONS, WAS THE FIRST TO SPEAK. AS WILLIAMS REVIEWED THE HISTORY OF THE NEGOTIATIONS AND CONTENT OF THE COVENANT FOR THE COMMITTEE, HE WAS INTERRUPTED SEVERAL TIMES BY CHAIRMAN BURTON WHO REEMPHASIZED MANY OF THE POINTS THE AMBASSADOR WAS MAKING.

BURTON SPECIFICALLY EMPHASIZED THAT THE CONGRESS AND HIS COMMITTEE IN PARTICULAR HAD BEEN "CONSULTED EVERYTIME" DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE COVENANT. IN AN ABVIOUS REFERENCE TO AN ANTI-COVENANT EDITORIAL WHICH APPEARED ON THE NEW YORK TIMES, BURTON STATED THAT HE WANTED THE RECORD "EMPHATICALLY CLEAR" THAT THE CONGRESS WAS NOT HANDED A "FAIT ACCOMPLI."

BURTON ALSO TOOK THE OCCASION TO PUBLICLY COMMEND AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS FOR HIS INVOLVEMENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH IN THE ENTIRE NEGOTIATIONS PROCESS. BURTON INTERRUPTED AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS ONCE AGAIN WHILE HE (WILLIAMS) WAS DISCUSSING THE LAND OWNERSHIP PROVISIONS OF THE COVENANT.

BURTON SAID HE WISHED TO UNDERScore THE FACT THAT BOTH CHAMORROS AND CAROLINIANS OF NORTHERN MARIANAS ANCESTRY WOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO TITLE OF LAND. HE ALSO SAID THAT IT WAS THE UNITED STATES POSITION AS WELL AS THAT OF THE MARIANAS POLITICAL STATUS COMMISSION (MPSO) THAT THERE SHOULD BE A NON-ALIENATION PROVISION IN THE COVENANT. HE ADDED THAT SUCH A PROVISION HAVE AMPLE PRECEDENT, CITING AMERICAN INDIAN LAND AND THE HAWAII HOMESTEAD PROGRAM.

CONCERNING MILITARY USE OF THE MARIANAS, BURTON SAID THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE HAS NO PRESENT PLANS FOR BASE OR FOR THE STATIONING OF TROOPS. AND IN EXPLAINING THE COMMITTEE'S POSITION ON EMINENT DOMAIN, REP. BURTON SAID THAT ONLY UNDER THE MOST COMPELLING AND UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD THE UNITED STATES EXERCISE THE POWER OF EMINENT DOMAIN.

AFTER AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS CONCLUDED HIS REMARKS, REPRESENTATIVE DON CLAUSEN, THE RANKING MINORITY MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE, MADE A PERSONAL EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION TO AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS FOR WHAT HE CALLED WILLIAMS' "EXCEPTIONAL" WORKING RELATIONS WITH THE CONGRESS.

THE NEXT SPEAKER WAS FORMER PLEBISCITE COMMISSIONER ERWIN D. CANHAM WHO EXPLAINED IN DETAIL THE CONDUCT OF THE PLEBISCITE OF JUNE 17. REPRESENTATIVE BURTON INTERRUPTED HIM ALSO BY EXPLAINING THAT THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DECIDED NOT TO SEND AN OBSERVER TO OVERSEE THE VOTING AS THEY WISHED TO AVOID DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY "IMPEDING THE FULL AND FREE EXERCISE OF THE MARIANAS VIEWPOINTS" AND ANY POSSIBLE CRITICISM.