

NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS DISTRICT
POLITICAL STATUS

ISSUE: Should the Covenant for future political status of the Northern Mariana Islands District as a Commonwealth of the United States be approved by Congress.

REMARKS: Emphatically yes! The Administration strongly supports the Covenant and the freely expressed desires of the peoples of the Northern Mariana Islands to become a territory of the United States in Commonwealth status.

BACKGROUND: The Covenant was negotiated by the President's personal representative, Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, during the past few years with the peoples of the Northern Mariana Islands District and was approved in a plebiscite this Spring by 78% of the voters. The Covenant was given to Congress for approval before beginning separate administration. It was approved by the House, but Congressman Burton had added two additional sections to the House Joint Resolution. Section 2 authorized the payment in full of awards under Title II of the Micronesian Claims Act and provided for the extension to Micronesia, Guam, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and American Samoa all Federal assistance programs now available to the States. The Administration is opposed to the riders attached to the House Joint Resolution.

The Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee has voted out favorably a Senate Joint Resolution which deals only with the Covenant.

WHITE HOUSE POSITION: The White House strongly endorses the Covenant.

CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST: Senator Hart (D. Colo.) is strongly opposed to the Covenant as is Sen. Pell (D.R.I.). We understand they are joined by Sen. Stennis (D.Miss.) and Sen. Byrd (D.W.Va.), and it is highly probable that both the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees will call for hearings on the Covenant (S.J. Res. 107) after the October recess.

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