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I. Reasons for Early Approval of HJR 549, as amended

The Marianas Covenant represents the culmination of years of effort on the part of ^{both} the people of the Northern Marianas and the United States Government.

The people of the Northern Mariana Islands, for more than twenty-five years, have expressed their desire to enter into a permanent political relationship with the United States. The Covenant is the result of 2 1/2 years of negotiations between the United States Government and representatives of the Northern Mariana Islands and four years of negotiations with representatives of the Congress of Micronesia. Those negotiations were undertaken in full and continuous consultation with those Committees of the U.S. Congress which have legislative responsibility over U.S. territories. Six months ago, the people of the Northern Mariana Islands approved the Commonwealth Covenant in a U.N. observed plebiscite. Representatives of both the Senate and House of the Congress of Micronesia in testimony before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee said they supported the Covenant. The President of the United States in transmitting the Covenant legislation to the Congress in July 1975, urged the Senate and the House to take early positive action to approve the Covenant. The Covenant has now been before the Congress for six months during which time the House of Representatives and Senate Interior Committee have acted in support of the Covenant. Early approval of the Covenant by the U.S. Senate will result in the following benefits:

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- Will enable the Northern Marianas and the Congress of Micronesia to cooperatively move ahead in a smooth and orderly separation and transition, which both desire.

This process is already far advanced as result of amicable and successful negotiations between the Marianas and Congress of Micronesia. The COM appointed Transition Committee has reached agreement with the Marianas District Legislature on most substantive issues. The only thing holding up progress toward transition is approval of the Covenant.

- Will permit early convening of the Marianas Constitutional Convention to formulate a constitution compatible with the approved Covenant and permit steps toward self-government during the remaining years of the trusteeship.

- Will enable the Congress of Micronesia and the other districts to move forward their own planning concerning ratification of their draft constitution, nature of their new government, and location of their new capital. These are matters in which all parties are interested.

- Will bring the peoples of the Northern Marianas and Guam together under one flag and citizenship. The people of the NMI and Guam are part of one archipelago with common ethnic, cultural, historic and geographic ties. While the NMI people have a close affinity for Guam, they have little in common with the other island groups in the Trust Territory which lie hundreds of miles away.

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- Will facilitate and improve the climate for completing the future status negotiations with the Congress of Micronesia by removing the Marianas as an unsolved problem. The divergence between the NMI and the Congress of Micronesia is clear and accepted by both sides. To force the NMI to continue participation in the territory-wide political processes against their will, since they have clearly spoken for separation, would be a denial of their free choice of self-determination and bad faith on the part of the United States. Resolution of the NMI question serves the interests of both parties and future negotiations with the COM.

- Will be a good faith, first step toward bringing the trusteeship to an early and honorable end in fulfillment of a moral obligation of the U.S. under the U.N. Charter and Trusteeship Agreement to give the people a choice as to their future political status. When all the districts are ready, the U.S. will take up the matter of termination of the Trusteeship with the U.N. and seek the agreement of the Security Council on termination.

- Will be an indication to friends and foes alike that the United States is firm in its intentions to maintain peace and security in the Pacific and reduce the possibility of instability. The Covenant supports our national security interests both in terms of current defense needs and as a hedge against unforeseen changes in our base posture elsewhere in the East Asian and Pacific region.

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- Finally, it is only right that the U.S. Congress give the people of the Northern Marianas an early answer on the Covenant, since, they have negotiated in good faith and feel so strongly concerning their desire to become a commonwealth of the U.S.. Early approval of the Covenant would increase the confidence and credibility of the U.S. Government in both the Marianas and throughout the Trust Territory.

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2. NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF ADVERSE SENATE ACTION
ON THE COMMONWEALTH COVENANT

- Deferral, delay in approval, or defeat of the Commonwealth Covenant would create severe problems in terms of the United States' credibility in the Northern Marianas, the remainder of the Trust Territory, and Guam.

-- Such adverse action would mean a particularly great disappointment and discouragement for the people of the Northern Marianas. Their negotiations with the U.S. were undertaken in good faith with the prior knowledge of the U.S. Congress and the encouragement of visiting Congressional committees. They have felt that they had every reason to expect a favorable outcome of the negotiations aimed at a close and permanent relationship with the United States.

-- Adverse action would weaken the U.S. position in the negotiations with the rest of the Trust Territory. Such action would be seen by the Micronesians in terms of U.S. willingness to grant the peoples of the Trust Territory the right of self-determination; i.e., leading the Northern Marianas to a point of actually having exercised their right of self-determination and then backing away from agreeing to their decision.

-- Adverse action would weaken the federal relationships with the Guamanians by raising questions in Guam as to the degree of our commitment to the defense of the American citizens on Guam, an island which is vital to American national

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defense interests . The Northern Mariana Islands are within sight of Guam and ^(of extreme importance) vital to its defense. The instability created by a Northern Marianas adrift in the world by a rejection by the United States would endanger the security of Guam.

- Adverse action by the Senate will cause the U.S. Government embarrassment on the international scene for its inability to resolve the political status matter in a successful manner; for the Executive Branch's inability to obtain Congressional approval of an arrangement negotiated in full consultation with the appropriate Committees of the Congress; for the disruption, confusion, and agitation which will ensue in the Trust Territory; and for the failure of the United States to live up to its obligations to promote self-government and self-determination in the Trust Territory.

- Deferral, delay in approval, or defeat of the Commonwealth Covenant with a view toward forcing them to join Guam or the rest of the Trust Territory would seriously weaken and probably destroy the pro-American leadership of both political parties in the Northern Marianas and encourage the small but vocal anti-American forces in the Northern Marianas.

- Deferral, delay in approval of the Covenant or its defeat would introduce confusion, complications, and uncertainties which will in turn create instability between the Northern Marianas and the Congress of Micronesia, the other districts, and the United States.

-- The people of the Northern Marianas have formally declared their desire to go their separate way from the rest of the Trust Territory. If a close and permanent relationship with the U.S. is rejected by the Congress they would be cast adrift in the world with the resulting probabilities for instability in that area. They would not decide to join the rest of the Trust Territory under the framework of the proposed Micronesian Constitution.

-- Adverse action would undo the progress that has been made between the Congress of Micronesia and the Northern Marianas in planning for the separation and equitable distribution of services, assets, and the relocation of the capital.

- Deferral or delay in approval which leaves the ultimate status of the Northern Marianas in question would seriously jeopardize our negotiations with the rest of the Trust Territory and place the Northern Marianas in hostage to the other island groups.

-- Defeat of the Covenant would have serious consequences on the course of the negotiations with the rest of the Trust

Territory. The forced participation of the Northern Marianas in the processes of ratification of a Micronesian constitution, in the deliberations of the Congress of Micronesia, in the economic planning for the rest of the Trust Territory, and in the Congress of Micronesia's negotiations with the U.S. on the political status would be awkward, disruptive, and confusing to the peoples of the Trust Territory and detrimental to the chances for a successful conclusion of the political status negotiations with the rest of the Trust Territory.

- A delay in approval of the Covenant which provides for separate administration pending the ultimate decision of the Congress would still create uncertainties, confusion, disruption, and a loss of credibility by the U.S.. Specifically, such a situation would:

-- Be confusing since any action on separate administration in the Northern Marianas is fruitless and premature unless there is some indication that the Congress finds the political goal, which is the raison d'etre for the separate administration, acceptable.

-- Confuse and complicate the whole question of the relocation of the capital in which the other districts are very involved. The other districts desire the relocation of the capital now that the die has been cast yet, once again, it would be fruitless to take any action on the relocation until

the Congress indicates that it finds that separate political futures for the two parts of the Trust Territory is acceptable.

-- Prevent effective economic planning for both the Northern Marianas and the rest of the Trust Territory since their political relationships would be uncertain.

-- Serve no purpose in nudging the Northern Marianas into changing their attitudes in the direction of joining Guam or the rest of the Trust Territory as their current desires and attitudes are firmly held and of long duration. Many in the Northern Marianas envisage future reintegration with Guam but after the achievement of Commonwealth status and after the people of Guam formally commit themselves to desiring such a political union. They will never be persuaded to join the rest of the Trust Territory, to which they feel little or no affinity, in a political relationship which has a loose and impermanent relationship with the U.S.

-- If the intent is to wait until an agreement is reached with the rest of the Trust Territory on its future political status it does not take into account the long time it may take to reach such an agreement. Those negotiations may very well be held in abeyance for some years until the proposed Micronesian Constitution is ratified and the new Government is in place. Additionally, the Joint Committee on Future Status of the Congress of Micronesia has indicated that it desires to renegotiate the foreign affairs, defense, financial, applicability of laws, and termination provisions of the draft Compact

of Free Association. In view of the provisions of the draft Constitution which are incompatible with the draft Compact a complete review and reexamination of the entire matter of the future political status of the rest of the Trust Territory is now required. The draft Constitution calls for a much looser and distant relationship with the United States than even the draft Compact now provides. Negotiations, if and when they do resume, will probably take a long time. The Northern Marianas should not be delayed in their progress toward their future political status by the rest of the Trust Territory nor should they be held hostage to the reaching of an agreement with the rest of the Trust Territory.