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January 6, 1976

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Senator Pedro A. Tenorio
P.O. Box 42
Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

Dear Senator Tenorio:

Let me take this opportunity to acknowledge your letter on the Marianas Covenant and to thank you for your very kind invitation to visit the Marianas.

My schedule and present commitments unfortunately will not permit me to travel to Saipan in the near future. I hope, however, to be able to accept your invitation at some later date. I enjoyed meeting you and your colleagues while you were in Washington a month ago, and our discussions certainly enlarged my understanding of the political and social situation in Micronesia.

Your letter indicates some misapprehension about my position. I do not believe that the U.S. Congress should seek to prevent the Northern Marianas from attaining a separate administration from the Marshalls and Carolines. As you will recall, I urged you and your colleagues from the Congress of Micronesia to complete your negotiations on separate administration as expeditiously as possible. I still regard this as being of fundamental importance. I also believe that the U.S. Congress should not place any obstacles in the way of the Marianas' constitutional development.

Furthermore, I believe that the U.S. Congress should be able to review a complete package of future political status agreements covering the whole Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. I would assume that this package would probably include the Marianas Covenant and the Free Association Compact between the United States and representatives of the Marshalls and Carolines. However, I see no reason why the U.S. Congress need make a definitive judgment on the Covenant without knowing what agreement or agreements will be reached with the rest of Micronesia. If the Covenant is based on

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sound principles now, it will still be sound a year or two from now when the Free Association Compact has been negotiated.

Meanwhile, I intend to do all I can to ensure that the U.S. Congress not pose any obstacles to separate administration or to further constitutional development for the Northern Marianas. Nor should the U.S. Congress foreclose the possibility of the Marianas people opting for association with Guam or even with the rest of Micronesia during the period in which a complete package of future political status agreements is being assembled.

I am sending my legislative assistant, Mr. Peter A. Poole, whom you have already met, to Saipan next week to discuss these points with you and with other members of the Congress of Micronesia. His present plans are not quite firm, but he hopes to be in Saipan from January 14 to 17. I am sure that he will call your office soon after he arrives.

Sincerely,

Charles H. Percy
United States Senator

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