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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

January 23, 1976

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The Honorable John C. Stennis  
Chairman  
Armed Services Committee  
Room 212, Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to express my deep disappointment and concern over the recent actions of the Subcommittee on General Legislation in rejecting the Covenant to establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in political union with the United States.

As you are aware, when the Interior Committee concluded its review of the details of the Commonwealth Covenant and ordered it reported favorably to the Senate, I offered a unanimous consent agreement to permit the Foreign Relations Committee to report on the foreign policy implications of approval of this Covenant and the Armed Services Committee to review the national security and national defense implications.

The Foreign Relations Committee has just completed its review and will recommend approval of the Covenant. The Armed Services Subcommittee on General Legislation, however, is proposing rejection of the Covenant on the grounds that the future status of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands should be determined by an agreement which deals with the entire Trust Territory.

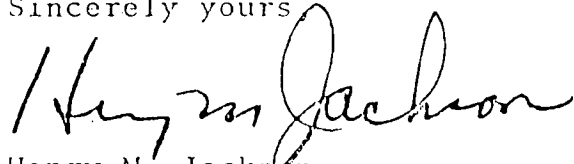
It is not clear to me whether the Subcommittee's reason for rejecting the Covenant rests on national security grounds or other considerations, but the Subcommittee's position disregards the long history of these negotiations and the good faith effort to negotiate an agreement covering the entire Trust Territory.

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The proposed Commonwealth represents an attainable first step in our efforts to resolve our future relationship with the Trust Territory. Rejection of the Commonwealth relationship, which has been eagerly sought by the Northern Marianas for many years, would jeopardize our ability to conduct serious negotiations elsewhere in the Trust Territory.

I need not belabor the national security significance of the Northern Marianas. Their proximity to Guam and their strategic position in the Western Pacific makes that clear. I simply cannot agree with members of the Subcommittee who believe that the national security interests of the country will be served by defeat of the proposed Covenant.

Sincerely yours



Henry M. Jackson  
Chairman

cc: Members, Armed Services Committee

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