

The 1.5 million 6,415

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Old Executive Office Building
Room 373
Washington, D.C. 20506

January 30, 1976

The Honorable Thomas S. Kleppe
Secretary of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In anticipation of the approval of the Marianas Commonwealth Covenant, the United States agreed some time ago that the Marianas District would be administratively separated on your authority, once the Marianas future political status question had been finally decided by the U.S. Congress. Additionally, the United States agreed during the course of the negotiations to a transition plan for the Northern Marianas. It called for the expenditure of \$1.5 million to cover the cost of a constitutional convention, ratification of a constitution, the organizing of the new government and the holding of elections. Economic studies and the drawing up of plans and goals for the new Commonwealth are also to be undertaken along with other special activities of a transition nature. A U.S.-Marianas Transition Commission is to be established as an Office of Transition Studies and plans to be located in Saipan. The latter will be responsible for directing and administering the use of the \$1.5 million transition funds.

The Senate in March of 1975 authorized \$1.5 million for transition (SJR 342) upon the approval of the Covenant by the Congress. My concern now is the uncertain timing of the actual appropriation of these funds and when they will be available. With the Senate Interior Committee being joined by Foreign Relations and Armed Services, final Senate approval may come in the next few weeks and hopefully before the end of February.

The Marianas and the Congress of Micronesia are expecting that once the Congress has acted, a Secretarial Order from you will follow immediately. Both the Marianas and the Congress of Micronesia have reached understandings on separate administration for the Marianas District and it would be in everyone's interest to move quickly toward separation once the way has been cleared by the U.S. Congress.

It is also of the greatest political importance to move immediately to implement the agreement reached during the course of the negotiations on the transition of the Marianas toward self-government and their new Commonwealth status. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the \$1.5 million already authorized by the Senate be ready, to enable the Northern Marianas to begin an orderly transition as soon as the Congress approves the Covenant. Any delay at all in permitting the Northern Marianas to begin this process will be greatly resented and will certainly raise the risk of ill will and unrest in the Northern Marianas in view of the understanding already entered into and the authorizing action of the Senate a year ago.

I would therefore appreciate anything the Interior Department can do to make sure that as soon as the Commonwealth Covenant is approved by the Congress, funds will be available to cover the immediate costs related to transition and separate administration of the Northern Marianas from the remainder of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

Sincerely yours,



Ambassador F. Haydn Williams
The President's Personal Representative
for Micronesian Status Negotiations

FHW:kkc