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April 20, 1976

Professor A. E. D. Howard
School of Law
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia 22901

Dear Professor Howard:

On March 24, 1976 the President signed a joint resolution approving a Covenant between the United States and the Northern Mariana Islands under which the Northern Marianas will become a self-governing commonwealth upon termination of the current United Nations Trusteeship. The President's approval triggers a transitional planning period of approximately eighteen months during which the Northern Marianas, with United States funding and technical assistance will prepare to assume the increasing responsibilities associated with self-government. Under the Covenant the Northern Marianas have the right for the first time to draft their own constitution and a convention for this purpose is currently scheduled for about August of this year.

This firm has been retained to assist the Northern Marianas in connection with the Constitutional Convention. We recognize that there is much to be done in too little time and that there is a considerable body of experience which should be drawn upon in connection with this assignment. It is in this regard that I am writing you, both because Dr. Wheeler recommended that I do so and because I am generally familiar with some of your work in this field.

Dr. Wheeler has been kind enough to arrange to meet with me and my colleagues in Washington on Tuesday and Wednesday,

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May 4 and 5, to discuss various subjects associated with the proposed Constitutional Convention. We have available, of course, many of the publications of the National Municipal League dealing with the mechanics and substance of State constitutional conventions. If you have any time available on either May 4 or 5, it would be of great assistance if you could meet with us and give us some guidance regarding the preliminary work which you think should be undertaken in connection with the convention and the staffing of the convention. We are prepared to cover your expenses and compensate you for your time at your normal consulting fee.

I recognize that this is short notice for such an invitation and that your academic and other commitments may preclude you from joining us on these dates. If these dates are inconvenient, perhaps you can give me a ring and we can discuss some alternative ways of taking advantage of your experience in this field. I would particularly appreciate any suggestions you might have regarding experienced professionals (other than lawyers) who might be available to consult with us during the next few months and perhaps participate in the convention itself.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Howard P. Willens