



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Office of the Governor

Cable Address:
Gov. NMI Saipan

Division of Animal Health & Animal Industry
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
P.O. BOX 677
Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

July 3, 1985

The Honorable Lorenzo I. Guerrero
Chairman, Committee on Finance & Other Matters
Second Northern Marianas Constitutional Convention
Saipan, CM 96950

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for allowing me to comment on the following proposals: Nos. 108-85, 31-85, 66-85, 69-85 and 72-85.

Proposal No. 108-85: This proposal would allow an entertainment expense for the offices of the Governor, Lt. Governor, Chief Justice, Mayors, Chief Commissioner and other elected offices for non-Commonwealth guests. I believe this is not a bad proposal, but I do think that it should be more specific. I fail to see how one can really justify that all elected officials be entitled to an entertainment expense. Moreover, the ceiling on entertainment expense to any office, if allowed and approved, must be governed by the Legislature, depending on the availability of funds. It should, however, receive a very low priority in the budget process. I also recommend that entertainment expenses be abolished for all boards, commissions, councils, committees, etc. if government funds are to be used. They should not be entitled to such luxury especially since there are far better uses for their money than entertainment.

Proposal No. 31-85: At this time, I am very much opposed to seeing any real estate and real property tax imposed in the Commonwealth. The reason is that such a tax would impose too heavy a burden on many of our older people who hold title to real estate or real property. Most of these land owners do not work and depend on their farms to make a simple living. To tax them simply because they own land would be too harsh, unfair, unreasonable, inhuman and uncalled for. They would have to give up their land and be forced to sell or part with them one way or another, which I believe would be too unkind and unthinkable, especially since to many of them, land is all that they have got.

Land, as we all know, is very, very limited in the Commonwealth. To give it up would be like giving up an entire family; like abandoning one's loved ones. The worst thing that could happen, however, is that our native islanders will be displaced from their own lands and will be forced to live in rented or low-cost housing. People from the outside, especially those with money, will come in and buy up the native lands since our own people cannot compete with these rich entrepreneurs. The guy with the best offer will end up with

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all the good, productive lands. Our native islanders will become landless as well as homeless. The rich statesiders, Japanese, Chinese, Koreans and Filipinos will ultimately become the landowners, and will end up ruling and governing our islands because of their money and would-be influence.

What I would strongly suggest is to prohibit the sale of all Commonwealth land except to those individuals of Northern Marianas decent. Corporations, companies, unions, associations and businesses of all sorts must be prohibited from owning land at least for the next 100 years!

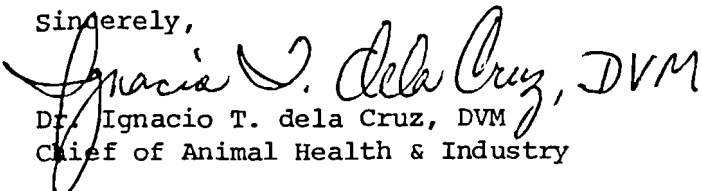
Proposal No. 66-85: I feel very strongly that we should continue to operate our government on a balanced budget and that we should not incur any public debt. By incurring a public debt, taxes must be increased to pay it off, or else new sources of government income must be sought. The other alternatives are to reduce government spending, reduce the number of civil service and contract employees, do away with the automatic annual within-grade-increases, reduce the number of hours in a work-week, etc. Public debt is not a necessary evil; we should be able to live without it.

Proposal No. 69-85: This proposal would see to it that interest accruing from funds derived from the lease of Commonwealth property in the Tanapag Harbor be equally divided among the three municipalities of Rota, Tinian and Saipan, to be spent not necessarily on the development and maintenance of memorial parks thereat. Amounts necessary to meet reasonable expenses of administration are to be set aside.

I feel that said interest should only be used to develop fully and maintain the American Memorial Park in the Garapan area. As it is now, there has been very little improvement or development of the Park. A lot of work is needed to transform the Park into a good memorial where it could be readily appreciated and made use of by the public and by tourists from everywhere. Let's do something big and concrete first to the American Memorial Park before we start talking about other memorial parks and community projects!

Proposal No. 72-85: I do believe that the importation, use and operation of poker and slot machines require very careful deliberation and must be studied in depth before we can render a good decision one way or other. Gambling, as we all know, is extant on this island. People play cards for big money out in the wide open. Hundreds and thousands of dollars change hands during wakes and other occasions. We may, however, be forced to rely on tax money from gambling operations to run our schools at some future date! But along with gambling comes all sorts of vices such as prostitution, pornography (which we already have), drugs, criminal acts (murder, mugging, robbery, arson, etc.), etc. This is a real tough proposal to entertain. Maybe poker machines should not be reintroduced at least for the next ten years!

Sincerely,


Dr. Ignacio T. dela Cruz, DVM
Chief of Animal Health & Industry

cc: Director of Natural Resources
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