



The Senate
FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
P.O. Box 129
Saipan, CM 96950

Phone: 6534/6539

July 15, 1985

Mr. Herman T. Guerrero
President
Second Northern Marianas Constitutional
Convention
Saipan, CM 96950

Dear President Guerrero:

I am aware of certain proposals before the Constitutional Convention relevant to issues of local government. I wish to address two such issues: powers of the mayors, and municipal councils.

Because of the actual physical separation of our various islands, and the resulting delays in travel and communication, it is essential to have a local center or focus of responsibility for the day-to-day administration of public services. The present arrangement in Article III, Section 17 of our current constitution has not been workable. There is essentially no supervisory accountability for the delivery of services at the local level, on Tinian and Rota, because the various resident department heads know the mayors have no clear power over them and they also know that their own superiors are not really available. On a day-to-day basis the expressed complaints and requests of the public go unheeded, the priorities determined through the local leadership process. Consequently, I wish to recommend and support in the strongest possible terms adoption by the Constitutional Convention of proposals that would make the mayors actually and practically responsible for the delivery of public services on Tinian and Rota.

It has been suggested that in order to provide an appropriate check and balance for such authority for the mayors, there should be municipal councils. I do not agree. The local law function of the Legislature as currently provided in our Constitution [Article II, Section 6 and Article VI, Section 3(e) and (f)] and chapter 4 of Division 1, of Title 1 of the Commonwealth Code are adequate and workable. Additional checks are found in the system of administrative departments, and in the budget process.

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Addition of municipal councils to our government will certainly contribute nothing to accountability or efficiency and such councils would impose severe financial demands on our local taxpayers at a time when they are already being asked to assume the tax burden for more of the costs of government. I am requesting the delegates from Tinian and Rota, with the supports from Saipan delegates, to seriously consider dropping their delegate proposal pertaining to the creation of a municipal council type of government. Furthermore, I encourage them not to be guided by any prior bad experience they may have with the mayor system, but rather to be cognizant of the important role that office can play in assisting the needs of the people. I am confident that the people of Rota join with me in opposition to the cumbersome, expensive and unnecessary imposition of such an additional layer of government.

Since time is of the essence, and the Convention may be adjourning sine-a-die on Wednesday, July 17, 1985, I strongly solicit your support in adopting a proposal that would grant the mayors of Tinian and Rota with the full power and authority for the faithful execution of Commonwealth Laws and the delivery of public services in their respective jurisdiction. It may be a long while before we have another such opportunity. Therefore, I respectfully request that you act now.

Sincerely yours,

Sen. Benjamin T. Manglona

xc: Delegates to the Constitutional
Convention