

SECOND NORTHERN MARIANAS CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

SAIPAN, CM 96950

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6517/6572

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REPORT TO THE CONVENTION BY THE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS

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Subject: COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION NO. 61

Your Committee on Governmental Institutions after extended deliberation and discussion hereby recommends to the Convention, meeting as a Committee of the Whole, adoption of Delegate Proposal No. 232-85 relative to establishing a Legislative Bureau in the Legislature for the purpose of centralizing legislative professional and administrative services.

Delegate Proposal No. 232-85 is one of the thirty (30) proposals referred to the Committee with respect to legislative reform. A grouping of these proposals shows that they address the questions of:

1. Qualifications and number of members of the Senate and House of Representatives;
2. Budgetary limitations for both houses;
3. Limiting the number of session days; and
4. Centralizing the professional and administrative services of the Legislature.

Your Committee on Finance and Other Matters has already addressed the question of budgetary limitation (Committee Recommendation No. 24). Your Committee on Governmental Institutions has already reported affirmatively on limiting the number of legislative session days, (Committee Recommendation No. 52). A report on the membership of the Senate and House of Representatives will be recommended under separate cover.

There is no question in the minds of the delegates that something positive must be done with respect to the above questions. Your Committee recognizes that the people of the Northern Marianas are looking forward expectantly to positive recommendations with respect to legislative reforms. In view of this expectation, your Committee on Governmental Institutions recommends to the Convention adoption of the Constitutional amendment presented in Delegate Proposal No. 232-85.

The intent of Delegate Proposal No. 232-85 is to centralize the professional and administrative services of the Legislature under the Legislative Bureau. Under this proposal, the Bureau:

1. Shall be headed by a director of legislative bureau to be appointed by the joint leadership of the legislature consisting of the presiding officers, vice speaker, vice president, floor leaders and the chairmen of the standing committees;
2. The Director will be empowered to employ all necessary professional and administrative staff pursuant to budgetary appropriations. Professional and administrative staff will include the following:
 - a) Chief Legal Counsel and assistants;
 - b) Budget and legislative analysts;
 - c) House/Senate clerks, secretaries, journal clerks, and clerk typists;
 - d) Committee assistants, researchers, librarian and xerox operators.

Personal assistants and secretaries of individual members and/or presiding officers are not included in the above staff description.

3. Will provide a range of services from major report writing and bill/resolution drafting for the Legislature to answering telephone requests for information. These services will include but not be limited to:
 - a) Preparation of studies and reports and drafting legislative measures in response to legislative requests;
 - b) Conducting of impartial research, including legal research as may be necessary for the enactment of legislation, upon request by the Legislature and its Standing Committees;
 - c) Preparatory activities for the Legislature prior to sessions and public hearings;
 - d) Providing secretarial and clerical services to the Legislature and its Standing Committees;
 - e) Maintain a reference library; and
 - f) Other requirements as set forth by the Legislature.
4. By a majority of votes of each house of the legislature, the director may be removed with or without cause.

5. Will be free from any political influence or pressure.

By centralizing the professional and administrative services of the Legislature, present costs will be reduced significantly perhaps as much as fifty percent; utilization of stenographic equipment will be maximized; procurement of supplies and materials will be monitored and coordinated more efficiently; duplication of research on bills and resolutions will be avoided; legislation will be passed without significant conflicts; and, reports will be better coordinated and produced promptly.

Your Committee recognizes that certain potential problems may be encountered under the enactment of the subject proposal, but it believes the advantages gained outweigh the potential problems. There will be problems if one house is controlled by a different political party than the other, and there will be continuing potential problems with questions of staff loyalty, task priority, and personnel recruitment, among others.

The question of loyalty should not be considered to be a serious concern. The people of the Northern Marianas would like to see more responsive and productive legislators and this proposed amendment would accomplish that goal. The employees will be loyal to the Legislature and to the people of the Northern Marianas if the legislation produced is for the betterment of the people.

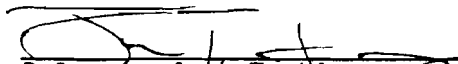
With respect to who comes first and task priority, the Director of the Legislative Bureau will meet regularly with the leadership of the Legislature to seek their input on the scheduling of pressing matters. Again, your Committee believes that this concern will neither hamper the operations of the Legislature nor inhibit its functioning.

We have confidence that the Director of the Legislative Bureau also will consult regularly with the leadership of the Legislature with respect to appointments of professional staff. Administrative staff positions will be governed by the current recruitment procedures of the Civil Service System.


Delegate Proposal(s): Your Committee incorporated the concerns of Delegate Proposal No. 232-85 into the attached recommended constitutional amendment.

Your Committee strongly urges all Convention delegates to support and adopt this recommended amendment.

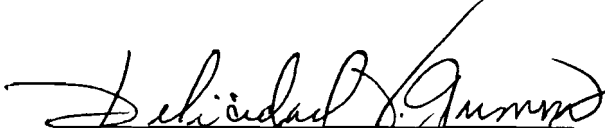
Respectfully submitted,



Delegate Juan T. Lizama
Chairman



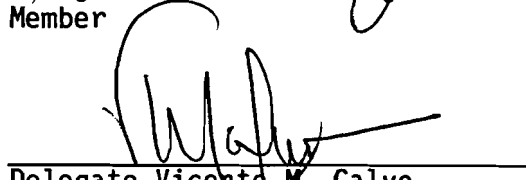
Delegate Jesus P. Mafias
Vice Chairman



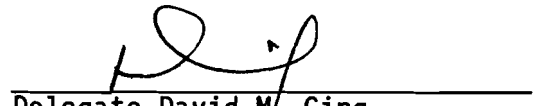
Delegate Felicidad T. Ogumoro
Member



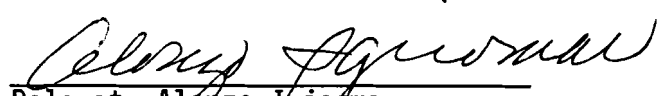
Delegate Benusto R. Kaipat
Member



Delegate Vicente M. Calvo
Member



Delegate David M. Cing
Member



Delegate Alonzo Agisomar
Member

A PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

To amend Article II of the Northern Marianas Constitution by adding a new Section 16 relating to establishing Legislative Bureau.

BE IT ADOPTED BY THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION:

Upon ratification pursuant to Section 5 of Article XVIII of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Constitution and Public Law No. 4-30, the Constitution of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is amended as follows:

1 I. Effective upon ratification, ^{the new} Section ~~16~~ ^{is included to} of Article II is ~~amended~~ to read:

2 "Section 16. Legislative Bureau. There is hereby established a
3 legislative bureau in the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

4 "a) The bureau shall be headed by a director of legislative bureau
5 to be appointed by the joint leadership of the legislature consisting of
6 the presiding officers, ~~vice speaker, vice president~~, floor leaders and
7 the chairmen of the standing committees.

8 "b) The director shall employ all necessary staff other than personal
9 staff of the members of the legislature pursuant to budgetary allocations.
10 The staff members shall include legal counsel and other administrative staff.

11 "c) The bureau shall provide all required services to the legislature
12 in connection to duties and responsibilities during sessions and committee
13 meetings. It shall maintain all records, files, library, and other documents
14 of the legislature.

15 "d) The director may be removed by a majority ~~of~~ votes of each house
16 of the legislature with or without cause.

17 "e) The bureau shall be free from any political harrassment and/or
18 pressure."

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Committee on Governmental Institutions

Adopted by COW
7/17/83

