

161 amendment proposals flood convention

■ **Rewrite:** School fees, casinos, development among issues raised for new constitution

By GAYNOR DUMAT-OL

Daily News Staff

Public schools will charge fees, legislators cannot legalize casinos, development of public beachfront lands will be prohibited, and taxpayers will be barred from filing suit over government spending, if proposals submitted this week by delegates to the third Northern Marianas constitutional convention become law.

Since the convention opened Monday, at least 161 proposals to rewrite the CNMI Constitution have been formally filed, out of as many as 300 that were pre-filed prior to opening day.

Delegate James M. Mendiola from Tinian submitted a proposal to delete a constitutional provision that guarantees free elementary and high school education in public schools.

Instead, Mendiola wants "the legislature or the Board of Education (to) work out the details of

what fees will be charged for education at various grades and levels."

Several delegates submitted separate proposals to take away the legislature's authority to legalize casino gambling.

Those who proposed legalization of casinos only through a popular initiative include Saipan delegates Herman T. Guerrero, John Oliver Gonzales, Joaquin P. Villagomez and Bernardita T. Seman and Tinian's Joey P. San Nicolas.

Some of them want at least two-thirds of the people's vote in each of the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota to approve casinos before casino gambling is allowed.

Commercial development of public lands will be prohibited under a proposal submitted by Villagomez and Rota delegate Benjamin T. Mangiona.

"All public lands, including any oceanfront property, are designated as public parks in perpetuity," Villagomez's proposal states. "Public lands provided as public parks may not be leased."

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Herman T. Guerrero gets a hug from co-delegate Marian A. Pierce after Guerrero was elected constitutional convention president by one point over former Gov. Carlos Camacho.

Gaynor Dumat-ol/Daily News Staff

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Governor: Finance secretary 'not comfortable' with planned debt

■ **Resignations:** Cabrera quits over plan to pay for road project with expected federal money

By GAYNOR DUMAT-OL

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Finance Secretary Maria Cabrera has quit her job, Gov. Froilan C. Tenorio said yesterday.

Tenorio said Cabrera submitted her resignation earlier this week and that her

resignation has been accepted effective immediately.

Cabrera quit because the governor said "she did not feel comfortable" signing a contract that was being finalized to award a \$21 million Saipan road project to a Korean company called World Corp.

Tenorio said the contract would allow World Corp. to build two highway projects worth \$21 million out of that firm's own money.

The CNMI government would pay for

the project in three years, using money expected from federal highway funds.

Cabrera's signature was needed to certify that funds would be available to pay the Korean company, and the finance secretary, "did not want to certify that the funds were there," Tenorio said.

World Corp.'s build-now-payment-later deal with the government was the first of its kind and the contract would not go through bidding process.

The governor said the contract was be-

ing looked into by the attorney general's office, but said he thinks it was legal based on what he has learned about it.

The governor went on to say, however, that the CNMI was only sure about receiving federal highway funds up to 1997 at a yearly funding of \$3.5 million.

If the federal highway funding stops after 1997, the CNMI might not have enough money to pay World Corp. if the deal goes through.

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