

Tenorio vows to campaign against charter's ratification

If gambling is totally outlawed

With his economic plan anchored on casino gambling, Gov. Froilan C. Tenorio served notice to the Constitutional Convention he would vehemently oppose any move to unequivocally outlaw gambling.

Although the existing constitution makes gambling illegal, it allows legalization through legislation or public initiative.

Four proposed amendments had been filed in the Concon seeking to strip the Legislature any power to legalize gambling on Saipan and Rota.

Tenorio said he will actively campaign against the ratification of any provision not to his liking, particularly on the gambling issue.

But the Governor made it plain he won't interfere with the work of the Concon.

"They can do whatever they like," he stressed, at the same time denying reports he has two "strongmen" in the Concon—President Herman T. Guerrero and delegate Victor Hocog—who are actively pushing for his agenda.

"I admit I have my own agenda," the Governor said. But he will submit this to the body just as any ordinary citizen could.

And just like any ordinary citizen, he said, he could campaign against the ratification of any provision that would be unacceptable to him.

Among the many things he wants enshrined in the constitution are:

1. The inclusion of the Supreme Court as a co-equal branch of the government. Currently, the Supreme Court operates based on a law created by the Legislature which can be subject to repeal.
2. The abolition of the Northern Islands municipality.
3. The island-wide election of House representatives from Saipan. At present, they are elected by precincts.
4. A time limit for the Legislature to override a Governor's veto.
5. The repeal of Amendment 25.

The Governor also reminded

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Lt. Gov. Jesus C. Borja (seated second from left) and former Gov. Larry Guerrero (seated near the aisle) were among the prominent guests at the opening of the Concon Monday.

the Concon delegates that under the Covenant, the Legislature should exercise a lot of powers. The second Constitutional Convention, according to him, clipped some of these powers.

The third Concon should give these powers back to the Legislature where they properly belong, he added.

Meanwhile, Concon President Herman T. Guerrero has appointed three vice presidents from the islands of Rota, Tinian, and Saipan. They are Rota Del. Justo S. Quitugua as the Convention's first vice president; Tinian Del. David Q. Maratita as second vice president; and Saipan Del. Frances Lg. Borja as third vice president.

He also appointed Saipan Del. John Oliver Gonzales as secretary and Rota Del. Victor B. Hocog as floor leader. The appointments of the vice presidents and secretary were made Wednesday.

Guerrero also appointed Saipan Del. Jose R. Lifofoi as chairman of the Committee on Land and Personal Rights, with Del. Marian Aldan Pierce as vice chairperson; Saipan Del. Tomas B. Aldan as chairman of the Committee on Legislative Branch and Public Finance, with Del. Juan S. Tenorio as vice chairman; Saipan

Del. Felix R. Nogis as chairman of the Committee on Executive Branch and Local Government, with Tinian Del. James M. Mendiola as Vice Chairman; and Tinian Del. Henry U. Hofschneider as chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary and Other Elected Offices, with Del. Donald B. Mendiola of Saipan vice chairman.

Just before the day's session ended, Rota Del. Benjamin T. Mangiona, in an emotional remarks before the Convention, took issue with Gov. Froilan C. Tenorio's remarks in one of the local newspapers suggesting that the islands of Tinian and Rota, and San Antonio Village at the southern end of Saipan, be represented in the House of Representatives by a single member to be elected at large.

Mangiona said the issue is "very sensitive" to the residents of the islands of Tinian and Rota. He said it looks like the CNMI is "turning back the clock to the Trust Territory government time. Mangiona represented Rota, Tinian and parts of the southern end of Saipan as a member of the House of Representatives at the Congress of Micronesia.

He serve as an elected member of that body for two terms, for a total of four years.

Concon opening: some boners

At exactly 10 a.m. Monday, the 27 delegates were called in one by one into the newly refurbished chamber of the House of Representatives. Not unlike the biblical injunction that the first will be the last, the Saipan delegate who garnered the most number of votes, John Oliver DLR Gonzales, came in last. Not by design though.

When Gonzales's name was first called out, he was nowhere. So he waited till the last delegate had been called in before entering the cramped hall.

After the singing of the National Anthem and the Commonwealth's hymn, and the reading of the invocation, pre-convention chairman Herman T. Guerrero, better known as Jun Pan, banged the gavel to signal the formal opening of the 60-day convention.

Without any pageantry, the delegates got down to business by taking their oath of office and subsequently electing their president.

Guerrero, as mandated by Concon rules, stepped down as presiding officer during the balloting as he was running for president. He named Victor Hocog, the delegate from Rota and concurrent chairman of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp., to take over.

And Mr. Hocog provided the lighter relief to an otherwise drab proceedings. The few awkward blunders he made drew some chuckles from the gallery.

One, he opened the nomination, but forgot to close it. He did so only after one of the legal counsels sidled up to him to tell him of the inadvertence.

Perhaps out of excitement or nervousness, Mr. Hocog took about some minutes before recognizing the delegate who nominated former Gov. Carlos Camacho for president. During the interim, he blankly gazed at the microphone. On the floor, the Mr. Camacho's supporter was straining his arm for recognition. Again, it took somebody to tell Mr. Hocog that the table was still open for nomination.

Now, nobody wonders why he got a ticket for having parked his car at the airport parklot and forgetting about it for many days.

Enough of the lighter side.

The balloting was done, with Justice Ramon G. Villagomez and retired Chief Justice Jose S. Dela Cruz acting as members of the election committee. Dela Cruz serves the Concon as one of its legal counsels.

(Shortly before he retired last May 14, the former Chief Justice said he looked forward to playing more golf. If this is his idea of golf, only he knows.)

The result of the balloting was a close vote between Herman Guerrero and Carlos Camacho—14-13 in favor of the former. Mr. Hocog then called for a recess—and he did so without any more boner.

Rules out soon on Pinay worker ban

Gov. Froilan C. Tenorio said Thursday the government will soon issue regulations to ban non-professional Filipino female workers from renewing their work contracts.

"The best thing to prevent abuse is to get rid of all Filipino female workers," he told newsmen. He said the administration is serious about it.

To prevent dislocation on the part of employers, the Governor said, the forthcoming rules would allow six-month temporary renewal. After that, the female worker will have to go home, he added.

The six-month period will give employers enough time to seek replacements elsewhere, according to

him.

Tenorio first broached the idea of banning Filipino women labor Tuesday, a day after he learned of the Philippine government's decision to expand the existing worker ban.

In March, Manila banned deployment of farmers, housemaids and nightclub workers to the CNMI following reports of rampant labor abuses in the Commonwealth, particularly on Rota.

On Friday, it expanded the ban to include all female workers, except professionals.

Tenorio said the proposed labor rules won't require an act of the Legislature. They could be issued through emergency regulations, he

said.

"We are not under any obligation to renew the contracts of these workers," he said.


In Manila, Rep. Tomas Concepcion, the sectoral representative for overseas Filipino workers in the House, recommended for a temporary ban on the deployment of all types of workers to the CNMI.

Concepcion, who recently visited the CNMI to conduct his own fact-finding investigation, said the temporary ban would give CNMI employers "the chance to take a second look at their Filipino guest workers—and probably learn how to respect and treat them better."

The Filipino congressman furnished Tenorio a copy of his recommendations.

In his letter to the Governor, Concepcion said his recommendations "would serve the best interest of my constituents (and) at the same time benefit the CNMI and the Philippines in finally solving the labor problems that affect our economies and foreign relations."

In his memorandum, Concepcion sought the implementation by the CNMI of an amnesty plan for all illegal Filipino workers, earnest settlement of all existing labor claims, strict adherence and compliance to US labor laws and recognition of labor unions.

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FILIPINAS MUST GO

Only a six-month renewal to be allowed
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Governor warns Concon

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The 27 members of the Third Constitutional Convention starts their 90-day job of re-writing the Constitution. The president of the second Concom, Herman Guerrero (Inast) was reelected to the post. Gov. Frolen Tenorio hopes the Third Concon will give back to the Legislature powers it originally possessed, to make it stronger as envisioned in the Covenant. But judging from the 300 proposals filed by the delegates this early, it appears the opposite is about to happen.

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