



COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

P.O. BOX 1370 CK
SAIPAN, MP 96950

June 21, 1995



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The Honorable Henry U. Hofschneider
Chairman, Committee on Judiciary
and Other Elected Offices
Third Northern Marianas Constitutional Convention
Saipan, MP 96950

COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION
WILLIAM S. TORRES

Dear Chairman Hofschneider:

The purpose of this letter is to thank you for your letter of June 19, 1995 informing PSS of the hearing on proposed amendments to Article XV of our Constitution and providing the opportunity to submit written testimony and present our views at this public forum. The PSS responses to the issues (as well as the history of our request for a change in the fiscal year, lump sum budget, and other pertinent educational initiatives are attached for your review) are as follows:

Article XV: Education

Section 1 (a): Terms of public education

1. Education - ~~“ Should—~~ There should be public primary and secondary education ~~continue—~~ to be provided ~~on a free basis—~~ in the Commonwealth as provided for by law.

2. Fees - There should be fees sanctioned by the BOE which include as follows:

- A. Activity Fee
- B. Registration Fee
- C. Lab Fees
- D. School Fee - with different rates for elementary and secondary schools

3. Education should be compulsory with the age range modified from the current mandatory ages of 6-16 to increase to 6-18 to reflect the age that most of our students attain as they graduate from high school. The increase to age 18 is to emphasize the importance of graduation from high school.

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Section 1 (b) and (c): Governance of education system

1. The school system should be decentralized to reflect local control of each school by parents, teachers and concerned community leaders working collaboratively through their school PTA. This is the school-based management mechanism that has enabled all of our high schools, junior high schools and elementary schools to achieve accreditation by the WASC. Decentralization should also be viewed as a way to maximize scarce financial resources while minimizing bureaucracy. However, if restructuring the school system is devised in such a way that it adds to the cost of administration and results in less resources going to the classroom, then this approach is insupportable.

For decentralization to work at its best requires equitable allocation of resources on a per capita basis.

2. The school board should remain an elected body to insulate the schools from political gamesmanship and promotion based upon politics rather than performance and merit. The makeup of the board should be retained (5 elected, 3 appointed by the Governor) with a modification for one more appointed representative to be a school administrator to represent public school principals on a school rotational basis.

Section 1 (d) Qualifications for school board

1. Additional qualifications to 1985 amendments:

A. Prospective candidates to serve on the BOE should have at least a BA degree from a US accredited college or university with five years of community service working in and for the CNMI.

Section 1 (e): Guaranteed percentage of CNMI revenues

1. To amend 1985 amendments that guarantee the PSS an annual budget of at least 1-5% 45% of the general revenues of the CNMI.



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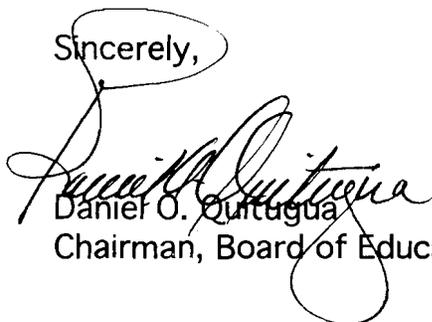
Other Issues

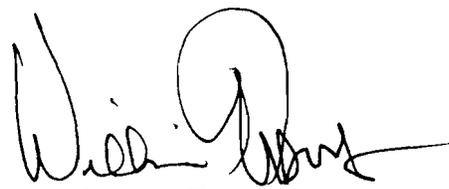
1. Chamorro and Carolinian should be required subjects.
2. The open government provisions should apply to the PSS.
3. The BOE should have taxing authority.
4. Parents of school-age children should be required to contribute support to the schools as long as their children are of school-age.
5. Still Other Issues: The BOE should be authorized to float bonds as provided by law. The PSS should be delinked from the government budget submission by establishment of a PSS fiscal year that dovetails with the school year and a separate budget submission schedule with submission directly to the Legislature. The PSS should not be subject to government by continuing resolution and should receive its annual appropriation in lump sum form rather than budgeted by line item object code. The PSS should receive funding in lump sum to address specific needs of our enrolled children in a timely manner. There needs to be a clear delineation on the authority of the Commissioner as established by law and the authority of the BOE.

We appreciate the opportunity to share these ideas and to work together with your Committee, in particular, and all the Constitutional Convention Delegates, in general, to enhance the quality of education for the 10,749 students enrolled in our system of schools.

With best wishes, we are

Sincerely,


Daniel O. Quintana
Chairman, Board of Education


William S. Torres
Commissioner of Education