

# Advocates seek protection for disabled in Constitution

Despite being rejected once, a leading advocate hasn't given up on a proposal to protect disabled people in the Commonwealth Constitution.

Bill Campbell, general counsel for Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems, Inc., wants to amend Article 1, Section 6 of the CNMI Constitution to extend the right to equal protection of the law to include persons who have a "physical or mental disabil-

ity."

Campbell said that he believes the amendment would still be worthwhile, even though disabled people have protection against discrimination under federal law.

It was this existing protection that prompted the Land and Personal Rights Committee of the Third Northern Mariana Islands Constitutional Convention to reject the proposed amendment last month.

Campbell believes that such an amendment would "send a strong message to the world that we are a caring society," and pointed out that the Legislature building, which is hosting the Convention, is itself inaccessible to people with disabilities.

He also pointed out that there are many people living in the CNMI population who have some kind of disability, and who have special needs.