

# Convention rejects proposed Constitution preamble changes

By DAN PHILLIPS

Delegates to the Third Northern Mariana Islands Constitutional Convention on Monday defeated a move to change the language contained in the preamble to the Commonwealth's Constitution.

Despite the endorsement of the Convention's Land and Personal Rights Committee of a proposal to add language to the preamble, the delegates were split on the issue and the proposal did not receive enough votes for passage.

The current preamble to the CNMI Constitution reads: "We, the people of the Northern Mariana Islands, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, ordain and establish this Constitution as the embodiment of our traditions and hopes for our Commonwealth in Political Union with the United States of America."

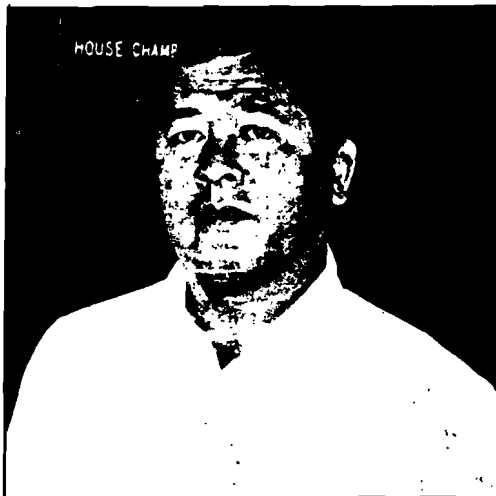
The committee's proposal would have kept the current language, but would have added to the end of the preamble these two sentences: "Our rights, secured and defined with respect for our own island ways, impose on each of us responsibilities and obligations which we acknowledge and accept. We govern our islands for the security and well-being of all our people and for the unity of our Commonwealth."

According to the committee's report on the preamble, seven of the committee's 12 members believed that the preamble should be expanded so that it would include the concepts of "government for the benefit of the people, responsibilities and obligations of the people, and Commonwealth unity."

Despite the support shown by the seven committee members, when the new proposal reached the Convention floor for a final vote (on second and final reading), the vote was 12 in favor and 10 against.

The proposal died because all proposals must be approved by two-thirds of the delegates in order to become proposed amendments to the CNMI Constitution.

Delegate Jack Villagomez of Saipan said that the rejection of proposed changes to the preamble came because "many delegates wanted to keep the language the same as it has been since the original 1976 Commonwealth Constitution."



Villagomez

## MARIANAS VISITORS BUREAU Board of Directors Meeting

July 27, 1995  
Pacific Island's Club  
9:00 A.M.

### AGENDA

#### I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS

1. Call to Order
2. Introduction of Board Director Vicente C. Camacho
3. Roll Call
4. Adoption of Agenda
5. Adoption of Minutes

#### II. REPORTS

1. Board of Director's Reports
  - A. Public Relations & Ad Committee (Director J. Ayuyu)
  - B. Membership Committee (Vice Chairman P. Ogo)
  - C. Personnel Committee (Director F. Abraham)
  - D. Budget Report (ending June 30, 1995)

2. Managing Director's Reports (under separate cover)

- III. ANNOUNCEMENT
- IV. ADJOURNMENT

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# Convention approves abortion amendment

By DAN PHILLIPS

A proposal that involves the people's most fundamental rights and touches upon abortion was given final approval on Monday by the Third Northern Mariana Islands Constitutional Convention.

The Convention delegates voted by a 23-0 count (with four members absent) to approve its final proposed version of Article 1 of the Commonwealth Constitution, which addresses personal rights.

With little discussion, the delegates approved the proposal carefully considered and drafted by the Convention's Committee on Land and Personal Rights.

The committee had initially recommended that section 11 (on abortion) of Article 1 be deleted entirely, but then later drafted new language that addresses abortion and other sensitive topics with what Delegate Marian Aldan-Pierce called "a protective provision, instead of a prohibition."

"The new section 11 would state that everyone has a right to life. It protects all types of lives, and it covers not only abortion, but also other right-to-life topics that are becoming more and more sensitive, like assisted suicide and euthanasia. This proposal, which includes unborn children, has even been sanctioned by the bishop," she said.

The new proposal states, "The

right to life for every individual during the entire life span from conception through old age is respected, honored and protected in the Commonwealth. This right is subject to definition and regulation by the Legislature."

The committee, in its formal report to the Convention, noted that abortion "is strongly disfavored and disapproved by all of the members of the committee," and that the Legislature has been considering ways to prohibit abortion in a way that will still be enforceable under the U.S. Constitution.

The bottom line, according to the committee report, is that the existing provision (which prohibits

abortion except as provided by law) is not only illegal, but also ineffective.

Several delegates supported the inclusion of private property in the existing constitutional guarantee of a "clean and healthful public environment" to every person, but the delegates voted to confine the right to public places.

The delegates also voted in favor of a proposal to delete from the CNMI Constitution amendments made by the Second Constitutional Convention in 1985.

Amendment 1 to the Constitution states: "Harmful and unnecessary noise pollution, and the storage of nuclear or radioactive mate-

rial and the dumping of any type of nuclear waste within the surface of the submerged lands and waters of the Northern Mariana Islands, are prohibited except as provided by law."

According to the report made by this Convention's Committee on Lands and Personal Rights, the 1985 amendment "permitted the Legislature to pass legislation accepting nuclear waste or dumping of other radioactive materials within the Commonwealth or its waters."

"There is potentially a large amount of money that will be paid to any jurisdiction that will permit the dumping of these wastes from sources around the world. The com-

mittee believes that such funds should not be accepted by the Commonwealth without a constitutional amendment," the committee said in its report.

"To make clear the determination of the people not to become a dumping ground for nuclear wastes, the committee recommends a prohibition on the Legislature from taking any action to permit such dumping," the report said.

In addition, the committee stated in its report that the "right to a clean and healthful public environment is a protection against enactment of legislation by the Legislature. It does not create a private right of action."

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