



Third Northern Mariana Islands Constitutional Convention

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AUG. 08 1995

Editor-in-Chief
Georgetown Law Journal
Georgetown University Law School
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dear Editor:

Nearly 20 years ago, the Georgetown Law Journal published an article in Volume 65 entitled "The Constitution of the Northern Mariana Islands: Constitutional Principles and Innovation in a Pacific Setting" by Howard Willens and Deanne Siemer. That article has been of enormous importance to the jurisprudence in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. It is cited in nearly every constitutional case, both in our Commonwealth courts and in the Ninth Circuit. But even more important, it solved many questions of interpretation before they arrived at the courts. The article has guided our Commonwealth as we developed our governmental system under the umbrella of the United States Constitution.


We have just concluded a Constitutional Convention in which we made some important amendments to the Constitution that was the subject of the article nearly 20 years ago. In the process, we had to tackle nearly all of the problems that face the 50 states today: abortion, the right to a clean environment, the size of the legislature, the deficit, budget ceilings and earmarking; the budget process; the education system; the civil service; power sharing between state and local governments; a Missouri Plan for retaining judges; an advisory opinion power for our supreme court to settle intragovernmental disputes; the recall power; taxpayer actions; public lands; and constitutional amendment. In addition, we face interesting problems because the Convention deleted the legislative initiative by which our legislature has previously amended the Constitution, and the legislature now wants to use its legislative initiative power (before the new constitutional amendments are ratified) to undo some of what the Convention did.

The authors of the 1977 article served as legal advisers to the 1976 Constitutional Convention. They were retained again in that capacity by the 1995 Constitutional Convention. We have urged them to write another article for publication in the Georgetown Law Journal about the innovations in the constitutional amendment produced by this Convention. Such an article would be of central importance here in the Commonwealth, but also would provide ideas and alternatives to state constitutional conventions that may be held in the future.

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We hope you will consider publishing such an article in the coming year.

Sincerely,


HERMAN T. GUERRERO
President, Third Northern Mariana Islands
Constitutional Convention
Chair, Post Constitutional Convention
Committee

cc Howard Willens
Deanne Siemer

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