

FORUM A Meet Opinion



TR's Marianas
By: John DelRosario

On Amendment Number 6

THIS constitutional amendment proposes to gradually sever the umbilical cord that now feeds mayoral office staff over the next seven years. It places the burden of responsibility in funding all positions under the mayor's office at the municipal level. It is an opportunity to gradually bring these offices into the reality of instituting responsible and accountable government operations.

Concurrently, another amendment would transfer the role of each legislative delegation to the two municipal councils. These councils, in concert with the mayors' office, can put their heads together in the consideration of revenue generation municipal ordinances. The two measures will revive the basis of our democratic institutions—small town community efforts in the attainment of self-sufficiency.

It may be shocking that there are these two amendments whose intent is the institution of a more responsible and accountable municipal government. They are positive measures in the challenge to leadership on how, through creativity, each municipal government can learn to build its own foundation. It offers the opportunity to learn, understand and appreciate the sacrifices of taxpayers in the Third Senatorial Districts and the struggle that they must endure to make ends meet. Moreover, nothing is ever handed down a silver platter and if you're receiving a freebie, then you better know that someone is paying for it.

If taxpayers from Saipan are coughing out \$2.8 Million in taxes to cover the employees of the mayor's staff on Tinian, not to mention the more than three million dollars in additional taxes that we had to provide to subsidize utilities on both Tinian and Rota, isn't it time that you too put in your share of these costs? These are funds that the taxpayers from Saipan wish to see spend on additional classrooms to get rid of double sessions, instructional materials, supplies, among other needs throughout the schools here. Excuse the rather blunt expression, but when push comes to shove, someone has to shake you out of your comfortable seat.

Amendment Number Six will put to a test the issue of leadership and how well such claim to leadership is employed in the study of innovative ways to generate revenues and most importantly, staying within one's means. It will put to a grinding halt any further dalliance with the "cargo cult mentality", effectively bringing politicians to a reality check on what he can or can't deliver. Mind you, the problems of providing the best in public services is a familiar chorus heard Marianas-wide bi-annually. Why do these promises result in more misses than hits? No new sources of revenue!

At the more rudimentary level, it should be understood that the \$2.8 Million comes from the hard working people in the private sector who must exert every ounce of their energies to ensure that they make a profit and pay their quarterly taxes on time. It is this people in the private sector whose business revolves around making a profit or go belly-up. It is this people who understand with full measure the value of a hard earned dollar. It is this people who contribute a good portion of their gross income to pay for the lot of drone workers in political offices. They know what efficiency is all about. Mind you, ninety nine percent of government workers have no clue whatsoever what and how to measure efficiency because they don't have to work eighteen hours a day to turn in a profit to pay for their own salaries. Herein lies the difference. This is what the mayors of both islands must learn to understand right here and now!

For those who feel otherwise, it is obvious that you have a lot of studying and growing-up to do in order to understand the essence of the very functions of government. There's hardly any savings for programs under the current arrangement. The practice of sacrificing Joe's welfare in order to feed John is far from what anyone in his right mind can reasonably call responsible and accountable government. As difficult as the measure may mean to many who have turned "exploitative patronage" into an art in the jobs they now hold, it is time that both you and your leaders engage in deliberative discussions on revenue generation measures to support your salaries. It can be done and it must be done forthwith. If you still disagree, then it goes without saying that you haven't learned the very foundation of our democratic institutions founded on small communities who use every iota of its resources to attain self-sufficiency.

The very essence of Amendment Number Six is to bring back government to the people where it must reside. The mayors' office, in conjunction with the municipal councils, must engage in deliberative discussions to raise revenues for the office of the mayor. The very imposition of even the smallest amount in taxes will give a rude awakening to the general public who must shoulder this burden "Why am I being asked to pay more for more or less?" It opens up opportunities for the general public to question every tax measure being sought by both the council and the office of the mayor.

This scenario shuts all doors of lamañana because the general public will want to know why more taxes if it can't get something better for less. It forces both sides of the street to study each measure to the hilt so it is persuasive when presented in public hearings or town meetings. Employees of the mayor will be forced to work the clock and ascertain that the services they provide the taxpayers are delivered on a timely basis and in the best way they know how. In other words, no longer can any employee take the taxpayers for granted because it is through their hard earned nickels and dimes that they get their biweekly checks.

For all the blunt expressions that I have dished out today, I still hold the greatest respect for my brothers and sisters on Tinian for their admirable sense of proactivity. They want action, positive action, founded on the genuine desire to be active contributors in our collective efforts on revenue generation. They have taken their battle beyond expectation even defying the call against casino by the religious sector. It is this proactive attitude that Mayor Manglona needs to review for he has apparently missed the very sentiment of his people. Perhaps it is appropriate that he reviews this sentiment once more.

Move to delay March 2 vote

A MOVE to postpone by three months the scheduled March 2 vote on proposed amendments to the CNMI constitution has garnered support from both houses of Legislature.

House Bill 10-162, authored by House Vice Speaker Jesus T. Attao, was passed on final reading by both the House of Representatives and the Senate in separate sessions Thursday and Friday.

The bill is now headed to the governor for action.

If enacted, the measure will reset the special election to June 29th and it would mark the second time that the crucial vote is postponed.

The product of the Third Constitutional Convention was originally supposed to have been included in the ballot for the November 3, 1995 midterm congressional elections.



Jesus T. Attao

CNMI statute provides that proposed amendments are to be placed before the voters in the general election immediately after a constitutional convention, except otherwise provided by law.

The Ninth Legislature, cognizant of the need for voters to get

educated on the proposals, enacted legislation late last year establishing a March 2 special election date for the ConCon amendments.

With the ratification vote nearing, concerned citizens started calling on their elected legislative leaders asking that the polling be postponed due to the complex nature of the issues.

The Legislature responded with the introduction and passage of the new deferment bill.

According to House Speaker Diego T. Benavente, the delay is necessary so as to allow the voters more time in digesting the complex issues surrounding the proposed amendments.

"We would like to give our people more time to understand the issues they will be voting on," said Benavente in a telephone interview yesterday.

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US Labor to bring lawyers to help litigate NMI cases

By Mar-Vic C. Munar
Variety News Staff

THE US Department of Labor will seek additional manpower to help litigate

make arrangements with the Department of Interior for the funding requirement of additional litigation support for the CNMI.

"We don't need a legislation

training and seminars to business establishments covered by the Fair Labor Standard Act as well as local labor officials.

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Proposal to pave way for abortion-- Church

By Rick Alberto
Variety News Staff

THE head of the local Catholic Church yesterday opposed one of the proposed Constitutional amendments saying it could pave the way for the legalization of abortion in the CNMI.

In a pastoral letter read in yesterday's Sunday Masses in all churches in the Commonwealth, Bishop Tomas A. Camacho stopped short of urging the Catholic voters to vote against the amendment.

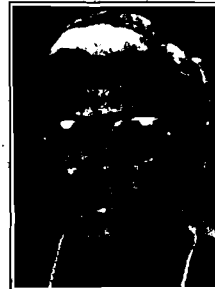
"I urge everyone to consider the amendments that are being offered and to vote as they think best," Camacho said.

He said one of the amendments "proposes removal of the clear prohibition on abortion and its replacement with a broader statement recognizing the right to life."

The amendment states that "the right to life for every individual during the entire 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."

Camacho said "it will take courage by the legislature to define the extent to which they are willing to respect and protect the people of this community."

He noted the legal obstacles that may arise from the fact that in the US the woman, under the



Tomas A. Camacho

14th Amendment, has the right to decide whether or not to bear a child. In 1973 the Supreme Court ruled that a state may not prevent a woman from having an abortion during the first three months of pregnancy.

Likewise, a state cannot prohibit but can regulate abortion during the second trimester of pregnancy.

The ruling overturned anti-abortion laws in 46 states.

"It is important that we assess our values as a people and attempt to protect the lives of all of us, especially those who cannot speak for themselves," Camacho said, referring to the unborn children.

The bishop said that while the government has a role in protecting the lives of the children, "the fundamental re-

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