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Amendments rejected

By DAN PHILLIPS

It looks like there will be no changes in the existing Commonwealth Constitution.

On Saturday, CNMI voters rejected all 19 amendments proposed by the Third Northern Mariana Islands Constitutional Convention.

There was some support for proposed amendments 5 and 15, but not enough to meet the existing constitutional requirements for approval.

Article 18, Section 5(b) of the CNMI Constitution spells it out: "An amendment proposed by constitutional convention ... shall become effective if approved by a majority of the votes cast and at least two-thirds of the votes cast in each of two senatorial districts.

Amendment 5, which supported the idea of seeking a non-voting delegate in the U.S. Congress, was supported by a wide margin by Tinian voters and received the support of a majority on Saipan, but it was well below



Matthew (right) and Peggy Japko from the Commonwealth Center study the ballot and the 19 proposed amendments before casting their votes at Garapan Elementary School in Saturday's special election on the proposed amendments.

the required 66.66 percent. Rota's voters overwhelmingly rejected proposed amendment 5.

The closest to approval that one of the proposals got was amendment 15, which would have made sure only the people of each senatorial district could decide on whether to allow casino gambling in a particular senatorial district.

Tinian's voters overwhelmingly voted for amendment 15,

and a majority of voters from Saipan and Rota also supported it, but neither Saipan nor Rota came even close to two-thirds.

The amendment slammed the hardest was 13, which proposed sweeping changes to the CNMI's education system. Saipan, Rota and Tinian voters resoundingly rejected the proposal, which was hit by active opposition campaigns right before election day.

Rota's voters, according to unofficial results obtained by Marianas Cablevision, resoundingly rejected all of the proposed amendments except 12 and 15. Amendment 12 proposed to amend Article 12 of the Constitution, which deals with land alienation.

On Tinian, voters only supported amendments 5 and 15, while overwhelmingly rejecting the others.

Saturday's election brought a very quiet day at the polls and a disappointing turnout by Saipan voters.

Despite the importance of what was placed before the CNMI's people, Board of Elections Executive Director Juan Diaz said he estimated that 50 percent of Saipan's eligible voters may have voted. He said the participation was much better on Rota and Tinian.

The election followed a blitz of campaigning by delegates, who urged voters to vote "all yes", and by some activists who asked voters to vote "all no".



It's Monday

Buenas Marianas

News In Brief

Pulling the plug • A controversial design contract for the planned Kagman school is about to be terminated. See story on page 4.

Korean memories • World War II veterans and their families from Korea recently returned to Saipan for a special memorial service. See story on page 6.

What's Inside

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