

On My Mind  
7/11/08

It's not clear whether proposals for 25 constitutional amendments have been introduced in the legislature (as was reported in a recent *Saipan Tribune* story), or only 17, as shown on Rep. Joe Camacho's web site, but in either case, to use that number as a reason for calling a constitutional convention - as the House has just done, by a vote of 9-8 - seems irresponsible, to say the least.

In the first place, it has been estimated that conduct of a concon would cost at least \$400,000 - nearly half a million dollars - money that isn't in the budget now, and that would be impossible to come by any time soon, given the current state of the economy and the CNMI's budget.

In the second place, the legislature's handing off the initiatives it has generated to another body, rather than fine-tuning them itself, is a major cop-out. Isn't that what they are paid to do? And there aren't even, actually, as many initiatives as the numbers indicate, since several are only slightly different from one another, and others have overlapping provisions. How hard would it be for the legislators themselves to bring the total down to a more manageable number?

Moreover, some of the proposed amendments constitute efforts to deal with narrow circumstances that may never arise again, or that are better solved through law rather than the constitution. By screening all of the initiatives for appropriateness as constitutional amendments - again, a task the legislature, having proposed the amendments in the first place, should take on itself - the numbers can be reduced even further.

In the third place, by calling for a constitutional convention to deal with the proposed amendments, rather than putting the proposed amendments on the ballot, any action called for in those amendments will be delayed, because a concon will have to be convened, the amendments discussed, revised, etc., and yet another election eventually held to pass whatever amendments survive the process.

Lastly, surely the fiasco the 3<sup>rd</sup> concon turned out to be should make everyone very cautious about holding yet another, holding one so soon, holding one while the "advisors" to the last one are still around and likely to become advisors for the 4<sup>th</sup>.

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Short takes:

Wasn't July 4<sup>th</sup> wonderful? Not only did it not rain on the parade, but there weren't ANY fireworks - except that evening at the fairgrounds. NO heart-pumping random loud explosions! No crackle, pop, boom, or any other disturbing noise that day, the days before or the days afterwards, be it morning, noon or late at night. Thank-you, thank-you, thank-you!!!!

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American Memorial Park is offering something new this month: the First Annual

Uke Jam in the Park on Saturday, July 26th from 5:00 to 7:00 PM on the Amphitheater grounds. Suggested by a Volunteer, the event will be a casual gathering of youth and adults who like to play or would like to learn or just like listening or singing along. There will be no concert, per se, but attendees will be able to relax and play or learn new techniques. Groups or individuals who want to are welcome to play on the stage. For more information, contact: Nancy Kelchner, Park Ranger, American Memorial at 234-7207 or 483-7253, or via email: < [mailto:nancy\\_kelchner@nps.gov](mailto:nancy_kelchner@nps.gov) >.

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Just as the papers sometimes do, I'm beginning my own count-down: I turned in the second response to Revenue and Tax's finding that I had not filed what turns out to be a redundant document with my tax return on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008. It is now one month and one week later, and I have yet to receive my economic stimulus check.

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Patients taking heart medicines might want to take a look at their prescriptions. The manufacturer of one of them has recalled one of its medicines because the dosages in the pills were uneven, creating a risk that could, conceivably, prove fatal. The brand name Digitek, for the drug digoxin, was recalled in April. Not all pharmacies notified all patients of the recall. Hence this warning. Those taking Digitek should stop, return the bottle of pills to their pharmacists, and ask for a generic replacement.

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A useful definition for these times might well be something the genius Albert Einstein is credited with first saying (which Walt Goodridge repeated in a recent column - but without identifying the source): "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." This has applications to everything from trying to patch up CUC engines again to voting for the same people over and over.

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Which might be a good place to suggest that voters watch the amount being spent campaigning by each of the candidates for Washington Rep. Do bought voters elect better candidates??????

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A suggestion for those trying to cut down on gas consumption in their cars: turn off the air-con and open the window! Running the air-con consumes energy - that is, gas. No air-con, less gas consumed. Especially these cool, rainy days, it should be easy to do!

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KRNM, CNMI's only public radio station, is back on the air. It is working with diminished transmission power, and missing parts are preventing the broadcast of several National Public Radio shows, so more Australian shows than usual are being aired. Station Manager Carl Pogue said that within a week or two parts should have arrived, and the station expected to get back to its normal schedule and transmission strength. Support is an on-going need to keep it on the air. Call Carl at 234-5766, or e-mail him at < [carlp@nmcnet.edu](mailto:carlp@nmcnet.edu) > to make your donation.

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Those who are lobbying for the resignation of the governor should be careful what they wish for. Next in line is the lieutenant governor. And next in line after that is the president of the CNMI Senate.

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Never let it be said that the legislature doesn't take care of its own. I have all kinds of respect for those who volunteer to serve in the U.S. armed forces. They have a degree of courage and fortitude we should all honor and respect. Yet it does seem to me more than a little over-generous that a member of the legislature who is called up to active duty would receive his full legislative pay for the entire period that he would be on active duty, for which he would also be paid by the military. If it is felt necessary to provide additional support, how about half-pay, at the most? Other members of the military called to active duty, who work for other branches of the government, or work in the private sector, don't get the same generous support. Somehow, it just doesn't seem fair, in addition to being spendthrift.

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Last but not least, I join Ed Probst in his call for massive protest if the AGGREKO contract for additional power goes through. As has been repeated again and again: there are cheaper sources of power; the CNMI could even purchase generators instead of just renting them for the same amount of money or less; it's not clear that a full year's contract is necessary. **WHY IS THE CNMI THROWING AWAY SO MUCH MONEY IT DOESN'T EVEN HAVE?????????????**

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation Management Act, which established and defines the fishery councils, has recently been amended, ostensibly in support of better management, increased conservation. However, proposed regulations implementing the Act have been found to have many loopholes, thus weakening the Act's effectiveness, and President Bush is now being asked not to bow to the powerful fishery lobby and to demand that the spirit of the law be followed. In addition, he plans to build on his legacy of ocean conservation, benefiting generations of Americans to come, by declaring additional national marine monuments that offer sanctuary to threatened marine life.

- Though it's been a couple of weeks, now, I'm still chuckling over the story in the <EM>Trib</EM> that wrote of Japanese tourists staying an average of 8 days on Rota, with one group staying three nights and four days, or seven days, and another staying four nights and five days, or nine days.....

More on Pew Trust:

ask for a plan. There is none! Comes later.

Compare to Hawaii. Different folks, different parties.

Feds do some good things - American Memorial Park, U.S. Post Office, FDIC, military.....

If non locals for the project are suspect, what about nonlocals against the project?

Cruz re talking to the feds directly.....

MVA - military and clearing harbor

It is somewhat dismaying to realize, however, that the last [15th] legislature passed 128 new laws. Surely that sets a record of some sort?

Department of Corrections Lino Tenorio was quoted in the <EM>Trib</EM> earlier this week as saying that the new prison could accommodate up to 500 inmates, based on a projected of prison population. Wouldn't it have been nice if he'd said, instead, that the

Will be interesting to watch which of the outgoing members of the House find new positions with the government....

Then there's Lower Base. Along the shore of the lagoon. More potential prime real estate on public land, which is instead being dirtied, polluted, abused, kept out of the market. Yes, it's convenient to have container yards and oil storage tanks close to the harbor, but "close" is, after all, relative. To move some of those facilities inland, away from the lagoon, would mean a distance of only a few miles. Rehabilitating the area might take some doing, but it makes no sense to keep it dirty just because it always has been.

Public land should be used for the benefit of everyone, but much of the public land that comprises Lower Base - especially along the shore - does not. Isn't it time this was re-evaluated as well? Not all commercial dock space has to be ugly, after all. In some cities, they have been redeveloped into profitable tourist attractions.

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Some of those, who'd been there before, even expressed their pleasure at being re-elected in terms of how much they liked their "job" and how happy they were to have their "jobs" back.

Excuse me, but when did being a legislator become a "job"? Aren't legislators, who make the laws the rest of us must live by, supposed to be representatives of the people who elected them? Aren't they supposed to be working on laws that help the community,

that represent the people's best interests, that improve the lives of their constituents, and the economy? Aren't they supposed to be answering to the people? Serving the people?

Perhaps it was just a poor choice of words, because doing all those things could be considered a "job" too, but I would have much rather heard those legislators say they were happy to [again] be in a position to work towards helping their people and their community prosper, towards improving education, towards improving the infrastructure.

Prime real estate on Capital Hill another neglected asset....

"There are good reasons to begin with a presumption against government action. As coercive monopolies that spend other people's money taken by force, governments are uniquely unqualified to solve problems. They are riddled by ignorance, perverse incentives, incompetence and self-serving." From "Don't look to gov't to cool down planet" by John Strossel in opinion column in MV, 11/21/07, p 12 from "Townhall")