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DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

★ news release

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SECRETARY UDALL SIGNS ORDER ESTABLISHING LEGISLATURE
IN TRUST TERRITORY OF PACIFIC

A significant forward step in political development in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands has been taken with the signing of an order establishing a legislative body for the territory, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall announced today. The two-house legislature will be known as the Congress of Micronesia.

Prior to Secretary Udall's issuance of the new order, legislative functions in the Trust Territory were exercised by the High Commissioner and the Secretary of the Interior. The genesis of the new Congress occurred in 1956 when the High Commissioner created a Micronesian advisory committee. This committee met annually and in 1961, with the encouragement of the High Commissioner voted to change its name to the "Council of Micronesia" and to elect its own chairman. In prior years the High Commissioner or a member of his staff served as chairman.

Secretary Udall said the establishment of the Congress of Micronesia marks a substantial step in the promotion of territory-wide self government by the people of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and will provide experience for the further progressive achievement of this basic objective of the United States stewardship, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Elections for the first Congress of Micronesia have been scheduled for mid-January although subsequent elections to the Congress will be held in November of even-numbered years.

The Trust Territory has been divided into six administrative districts which conform in general to geographic, cultural and linguistic areas within the several island groups which make up the territory. In addition to geographic spread--the 700 square miles of land area are scattered over 3,000,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean--nine major languages among the population of 85,000 impose substantial obstacles to communication and cooperation on a territorial basis.

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American administration gave self-government an early start with the establishment of district legislatures. The first, the Palau legislature, was created in the late 1940's. With this background of working to solve mutual problems, the Council of Micronesia considered proposals to create a territorial legislature at its October 1962 session. A political development subcommittee was established which made a further study of the problem and the entire matter was considered in detail at a special session of the Council held in March 1963.

The resolution of the Council urging the establishment of a legislative body included 35 items. This resolution, together with other legislative proposals, was debated again at the November 1963 session of the Council. The November discussion resulted in a reaffirmation of the March recommendation.

During the first four formative years of the Congress membership is fully open to persons holding major jobs with the executive branch or the judiciary of the Trust Territory Government. The High Commissioner is authorized to grant leave without pay to government employees to campaign for office. Many Micronesians who have had extensive legislative experience, on the District level and on the Council of Micronesia, are also employed by Headquarters or District administrations.

The Secretarial order closely follows the recommendations of the Council of Micronesia. As recommended by the Council, the Congress' two houses will be known as the House of Delegates, made up of two representatives from each of the six districts, and the General Assembly, with 21 representatives apportioned on a population basis. The order grants wide legislative authority to the Congress. Among its other provisions, the order gives the Congress power to levy taxes, requires that legislation twice vetoed by the High Commissioner be referred to the Secretary of the Interior for further action, and provides for participation in the preparation of the annual budget of the Trust Territory prior to its submission to the United States Congress. Provision has been made in the order for the appointment of a full-time legislative counsel to assist the Congress.

The order calls for regular annual sessions of 30 days. Experience indicates that such a period will probably be sufficient for the orderly completion of legislative business. If needed, special sessions can be called. Additionally, the order contemplates the possibility of official legislative activity, such as committee hearings and meetings, between sessions. Compensation and travel would be paid for such legislative activity, as well as for regular and special sessions.

The use of a Secretarial order to create the Congress of Micronesia provides the necessary flexibility by which changes can be effected easily and quickly as Micronesians gain legislative experience. Special provision is made for the submission to the Secretary of amendments recommended by two-thirds of each House of the Congress.

The Marshall Islands, the Eastern and Western Caroline Islands and the Mariana Islands, except for the American territory of Guam, comprise the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The area was administered by Germany at the

outbreak of World War I when the islands were captured by Japan. Placed under the League of Nations mandate system in 1920, the islands became an area of Japanese colonization.

During World War II the island-hopping campaigns of American armed forces made the names of many of the Trust Territory islands famous--Kwajalein, Saipan, Pelelieu and Truk. At the end of the war, the colonists were repatriated. The area became a strategic trust under a 1947 trusteeship agreement between the United States and the Security Council of the United Nations. Initially administered by the Navy, jurisdiction was transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1951. Headquarters of the High Commissioner were transferred from Hawaii to Guam in 1954. In 1962 Saipan, which had been returned to Navy jurisdiction in 1953 and again put under Interior jurisdiction on July 1, 1962, was named the provisional capital of the Trust Territory.

In 1962 a Federal appropriation ceiling for the Trust Territory was more than doubled and for the fiscal years 1963, 1964 and 1965 a total of \$47,500,000 has been appropriated by the United States Congress.

The increased appropriations have made it possible to launch an accelerated education program with more than 500 new classrooms with modern equipment scheduled for completion by 1966. More than 150 fully qualified teachers have been recruited from the United States with additional teachers to be hired as classrooms and housing become available. High schools have been established in each district center with secondary schools planned or under way in some of the outlying population centers. The scholarship program has been increased and more than 100 Trust Territory students are attending colleges and universities in the United States.

The medical staff has been augmented by eight newly hired M. D.'s and facilities for medical care have been improved by the opening of three rebuilt hospitals during the last three years. Reconstruction and expansion of hospital facilities in the remaining three districts is planned. Economic development is being stressed and the opening of a fish freezing facility in Palau by an American firm will make use of the marine resources of the area. Fisheries potential exists in other districts of the territory. Crop diversification is under way and such new crops as cacao and pepper have been introduced. Proposals from private firms are under study looking forward to a contract for an accelerated economic development program.

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