

NSC/5 1082

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

February 17, 1975

TO: JEANNE DAVIS

FROM: JACK MARSH *JM*

I would appreciate your supplying  
me with a report on the  
attached. Thank you.

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35TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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February 6, 1975

1082

FEB 7 1975

Mr. John O. Marsh, Jr.  
Counsellor to the President  
Executive Office of the President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Jack:

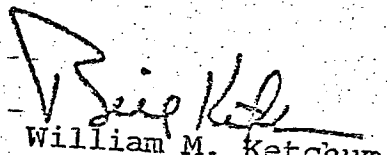
As the Ranking Minority Member of the House Territorial and Insular Affairs Subcommittee, I have followed over the years Micronesian political development. I have been briefed on the contents of the enclosed draft Covenant wherein it is proposed that the Northern Mariana Islands will soon join the American political family as a commonwealth. And, with the exception of the military land requirements on Tinian, I am satisfied with the agreement and anticipate no significant difficulties in reaching eventual House approval of the Covenant.

I do, however, have certain reservations regarding the procedures whereby the Constitution of the Northern Marianas will receive Federal sanction. You will note that Section 202 fails to provide specifically for Congressional review of the constitution. In my view, such an omission would be in error, failing to consider prevailing attitudes within the 94th Congress as well as ignoring legislative precedent. Under the Constitution, the Congress is empowered to determine territorial policy; and in this matter of historical significance, a renunciation of Congressional responsibility would appear unwise.

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Accordingly, I would like to discuss with you in the near future the role of Congress in the formal approval of both the Marianas' Covenant and the Commonwealth Constitution; and if a time mutually convenient for us is not possible, I wish, as a minimum, that you would discuss the issue with Tom Dunmire, our Interior Committee Minority Consultant. In this regard, I suggest that Mr. W. R. Smyser, who has been following the status negotiations from his position as a senior National Security Council staff member, be invited to attend.

Best regards,

  
William M. Ketchum  
Member of Congress

Enclosure: a/s