

OFFICE FOR MICRONESIAN STATUS NEGOTIATIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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April 21, 1975

MEMORANDUM

To: Norman E. Ross, Jr., Assistant Director,
Domestic Council, Room 218, Old Executive
Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20506

From: Richard Y. Scott, Director, Office for Micronesian
Status Negotiations

Subj: Funding for Plebiscite in the Northern Mariana
Islands

Funding is urgently required for the plebiscite in the Northern Marianas, now announced by the Secretary of the Interior for June 17. Such funding would cover all relevant expenses including those of the Plebiscite Commissioner who has been designated by the President in line with recommendations from members of the Interagency Working Group on Micronesia.

The plebiscite is being held in fulfillment of the responsibility of the United States as Administering Authority of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Observers from the United Nations are expected to be present to witness the plebiscite and as much of the pre-plebiscite activities as their time permits.

Cost of the plebiscite and its related education program is estimated at \$50,000. Breakdown of this sum including tentative staffing pattern is given in the attachment to this memorandum. It is to be noted that definitive staffing will depend on the Plebiscite Commissioner to whom the Secretarial Order has given considerable discretion in this regard within a general budgetary framework.

The Plebiscite Education Program under supervision of the Plebiscite Commissioner, the Voter Registration, and the actual voting will make use insofar as possible of Trust Territory Administration personnel who will be given administrative leaves with uninterrupted salary to fill these duties. However, the Consultant fee and expenses of the Plebiscite Commissioner and staff, travel expenses, materials and supplies and other outside hire as may be necessary amount to the estimated \$50,000 cost.


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Initially the Department of the Interior assumed responsibility for \$25,000 to be matched with \$25,000 from the Trust Territory budget. However, after further assessment, it was decided that it would be politically inadvisable to consider defraying any part of the balance from the Trust Territory budget since that budget is subject to scrutiny by the Congress of Micronesia which could be expected to oppose vigorously such diversions of funds to facilitate the separate Marianas status choice.

Last week, OMSN requested the Department of State (EA) to provide \$25,000 to cover one half of the estimated cost of holding the plebiscite. After carefully looking into every possible source of funds for this purpose, State ascertained that no funds were available as a result of unanticipated demands on funding resulting from the situation in Cambodia and South Vietnam.

The Plebiscite Commissioner is now in Saipan in the process of organizing the Political Education Program and voter registration board. It is essential that he receive as soon as possible the full funding necessary to cover the cost of preparing for and conducting the plebiscite in the Northern Mariana Islands.

It is recommended that the Secretary of the Interior be requested to fund the entire \$50,000 cost of the plebiscite and its related activities from Department of the Interior sources.


Richard Y. Scott

enc: as indicated

RYS:kkc