

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Old Executive Office Building
Room 373
Washington, D.C. 20506

NOV 7 1975

November 7, 1975

Mr. Max L. Friedersdorf
Assistant to the President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Friedersdorf:

On July 1, 1975 the President forwarded to the Congress legislation calling for approval of the Marianas Commonwealth Covenant with his endorsement and request for early favorable action.

The House responded and on July 21 the legislation was passed without dissent after having been approved by the House Subcommittee on Territorial Affairs and the full Interior Committee.

In October, the Senate Interior Committee voted approval of the legislation. The Bill was next referred jointly to the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees for thirty days (until December 3). The major known opposition to the Covenant is coming from members of these two last named Committees, and unless positive steps are taken to mount support for the Covenant it would now appear that its passage is in jeopardy.

As we see it the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has 4 yes votes, 5 no and 7 in the uncertain column. Armed Services estimated line-up is 6 yes, 5 no and 5 uncertain.

The three leading opponents of the Covenant are Senators Byrd (Va), Pell and Hart (Colo). Senator Jackson who supports the legislation is concerned and has said that he believes that a coalition of anti-military Senators and southern conservatives could join to defeat the legislation.

Those who are opposing the legislation are seriously attempting to build a strong record against the Commonwealth Covenant. Pell chaired the hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on November 5 (only one other Senator was there for part of the time - Percy - and he was in no way a proponent).

A hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee is scheduled for November 17. It will be chaired by Senator Byrd and it is likely that he and Senator Hart will dominate the hearing as Pell did yesterday.

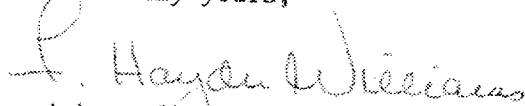
Our problem is that the legislation has no champion or champions to combat and counter the Covenant opponents - and this is especially true on the Republican side. Our timetable calls for passage of the Resolution before the Congressional Christmas recess. This highly desirable timing would immensely ease some administrative problems in the Trust Territory, make it possible for us to keep faith with the people concerned, and would significantly strengthen our negotiating position with the remainder of Micronesia. It is important that there should be no delay or slippage in favorable action by the Senate. To achieve such action we will need the immediate interest and active assistance of the White House.

Would it be possible for the White House to ask either Senator Scott or Senator Griffin, or both, to take a special responsibility for the Bill in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee? At the moment, we are unsure of Case, Javits and Percy and anything that could be done by Scott or Griffin to enlist their colleagues' support would be most helpful in addition to their speaking for the Covenant before the full Committee when it comes up for vote (November 13).

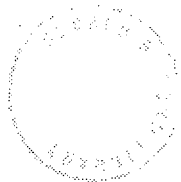
We also need one or more champions in the Senate Armed Services Committee. Senator Goldwater is favorably inclined toward the legislation as is Senator Tower. The other Republican members of the Committee are uncertain except for Bartlett and it would thus be of great help if the White House could get Goldwater or Tower to talk to the other Republican members and to assume the leadership in countering opposition to the Covenant.

I would be happy to discuss this matter with you. Needless to say, I would greatly appreciate your timely assistance which I feel is urgently needed if we are to stop the momentum that seems to be building up against the Covenant as a result of lack of any active backers on the Republican side in the Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees.

Sincerely yours,



Ambassador F. Haydn Williams
The President's Personal Representative
for Micronesian Status Negotiations



cc: Mr. Thomas J. Barnes, NSC
Mr. Lester Janka, CL, NSC