

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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

December 5, 1975

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

Dear Mr. Friedersdorf:

This is an update on the status of the Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Covenant legislation in the Senate and a further request for your advice and assistance.

As you know HJR 549, as amended, has been referred jointly to the Senate Foreign Relations and the Senate Armed Services Committees. The December 3 deadline for the reports of these two Committees has now been extended to January 27 by unanimous consent.

The hearings before the two Committees are over. We have been told that the Byrd Sub-Committee (Armed Services) intends to hold its mark-up before the Christmas recess. We have been told that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee mark-up will not take place until mid-January.

Opinion on the Hill is that the Administration's bill is in trouble in both of these Committees. The Staffs of Armed Services and Foreign Relations believe that at the moment the votes in both full Committees would be eight and eight--meaning defeat.

I believe that an early vote against the Covenant in the Armed Services Sub-Committee would be very damaging. Our present estimate is that the vote could go 6 to 2 against and that a 4 to 4 tie is about the best we can expect. Our vote count is as follows:

NO

Byrd  
Hart (Colo)  
Scott (Va)  
Leahy

YES

Nunn  
Tower

UNCERTAIN

McIntyre  
Bartlett

We do not think we can do very much about those in the no column. Byrd and Hart have taken the lead to kill the bill. I am trying to see Leahy. If the White House could talk to Scott it might be helpful but so far our efforts and Defense's have been to no avail with him.

Defense and Phil Burton are going to approach McIntyre. Both have indicated that they do not think they can do anything about Bartlett and specifically asked me to request the assistance of the White House with him. He is on the Interior Committee which has reported the bill out favorably and yesterday Mr. Harrison Loesch, the minority counsel, said he would try and get the Republicans on Interior to work on Bartlett, but Loesch too said he thought it would take a strong White House effort to win Bartlett's vote.

Since the vote in the Armed Services Sub-Committee is imminent, I would hope that the White House could take whatever action it can as soon as possible to reach Bartlett and possibly Scott. We will be happy to do anything we can to support this effort upon your request.

With regard to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I am hoping to see Senator Percy next week to arrange for a full discussion with him in January. I believe our first effort should be to persuade Senator Percy to support the Administration bill and to drop his amendment (which he has not as yet formally introduced). Failing this, our fallback should be to get him to amend his own amendment to make it more acceptable to the Administration. We have spoken of asking Secretary Rumsfeld to speak to Percy and Defense and my office are jointly preparing the memo you requested for use in approaching the Secretary of Defense on this matter.

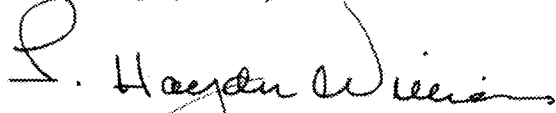
To summarize, the Northern Marianas Commonwealth legislation may be in serious danger of being defeated in both Foreign Relations and Armed Services and by the full Senate unless a serious effort is made by the White House to support its passage through the Senate. Ironically much of the most active opposition is coming from the Republican side (Percy, Bartlett, Scott) and as yet no Republican has been willing to champion the Covenant in either the Senate Foreign Relations or Armed Services Committees.

I am preparing a full resume of what efforts we have made to date along with State, Defense and Interior which may be

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helpful to you in advising us on planning our January campaign. In the meantime any assistance you can give us with the Armed Services Sub-Committee vote and any advice with respect to Senator Percy would be appreciated.

Sincerely yours,



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

FHW:kke

cc:  
Les Jenka, Congressional Liaison, NSC  
Thomas Barnes, NSC