

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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

December 12, 1975

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

Dear Max:

Thank you for your note of December 6, 1975 and for the help you and your staff have given me in the Administration's effort to attain Senate approval of the Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Covenant.

I am writing now in particular about Senator Percy per our telephone conversation of last week. Briefly, and by way of review, Senator Percy has taken a greater interest in the Marianas legislation than any other Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee but unfortunately his position is not supportive of President Ford's request for early favorable action by the Congress. Instead he is urging deferral of approval of the Covenant and beyond this he has stated that he believes the Northern Mariana Islands should reconsider their desire for political union with the United States and remain united instead with the Carolines and the Marshalls or alternatively they should be united with Guam. (We do not oppose the latter as an ultimate outcome, but this should come later not now). At the same time he has made known his doubts about the military importance of the islands and his great concern over what he considers to be the probable negative reaction in the United Nations to the Northern Mariana Islands becoming a part of the United States upon termination of the Trusteeship Agreement.

Bob Ingersoll and I have been unable to persuade Senator Percy to abandon his plan to introduce an amendment to the pending legislation which in our judgment would be in no one's interest: ours, the Marianas', or the Micronesians'. If passed it would complicate and confuse the picture by leaving the question of the future political status of the Northern Mariana Islands in limbo. It would also have the effect of weakening our friends and giving comfort to the anti-American elements in the Marianas and throughout the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Overall, as I see it, it could have the effect of driving the Northern Mariana Islands away from the United States, a development which I believe would be strongly counter to our short and long term national interest.

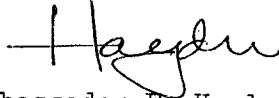
I had suggested that Secretary Rumsfeld might wish to talk personally to Senator Percy. I would hope that he would do so on an urgent basis. The Office of International Security Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense has all of the background and can brief the Secretary on the Percy problem. My office is also prepared to lend any assistance that might be requested. In short I hope the White House and Secretary Rumsfeld can appeal directly to Senator Percy to reconsider his position and to withdraw his amendment and join in support of HJR 549 as amended.

The vote in the Armed Services Subcommittee looks bad with the news from Mr. O'Donnell that Senator Bartlett is a lost cause. States feels that a negative vote out of Armed Services would just about ruin the bill's chances with the Foreign Relations Committee and with the Senate at large. I met with Senator Bartlett yesterday, and Ambassador McCloskey is scheduled to meet with him today in one last effort to gain his support.

I am returning to San Francisco today and do not expect to be back until after the first of the year. Miss Mary Vance Trent, the Acting Director of the Office for Micronesian Status Negotiations and Mr. Dave Schiele, however, will be here and will be available if you can think of anything that we might be doing on the Hill next week and over the holidays.

Again, my thanks for your help.

Sincerely yours,



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

P.S. I do hope that the President will find an opportunity to talk to the Republican Congressional leadership. We still do not have a Republican Champion of the Administration's bill in either Armed Services or Foreign Relations.