



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

MAR 15 1976

Dear Mr. Lynn:

This responds to your request for our views on the enrolled bill H.J. Res. 549, "To approve the 'Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States.'"

We strongly recommend that the President approve the enrolled bill.

On July 1, 1975, the President submitted to both Houses of Congress for their approval a "Joint Resolution Approving the 'Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America.'" As enrolled, H.J. Res. 549 is the Joint Resolution and the Covenant as transmitted by the President.

On June 17, 1975, the people of the Northern Mariana Islands voted in a plebiscite to approve the Commonwealth status as set forth in the Covenant. This plebiscite represented the capstone to more than twenty years of local efforts by the people of the Northern Mariana Islands to become a permanent part of the United States.

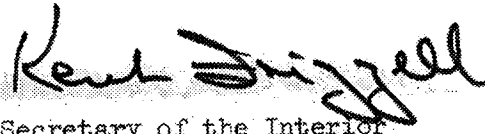
The Covenant Agreement in H.J. Res. 549 was signed on February 15, 1975, by the Marianas Political Status Commission for the Northern Mariana Islands, and by Ambassador F. Hayden Williams for the United States. It is the result of more than two years of negotiations between the United States and a broadly representative delegation from the Northern Mariana Islands.

Because of our responsibilities in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, this Department has had an important role in the Marianas Commonwealth negotiations. Representatives of this Department were on the U.S. Delegation for the Marianas negotiations from the opening round in December 1972, and provided policy assistance on Interior Department matters.



Presidential approval of H.J. Res. 549 as enrolled will represent one more important step toward fulfillment of the obligations which the United States undertook when the Congress approved, by joint resolution, the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement on July 18, 1947. The Covenant, as approved by the Congress, represents the freely expressed wish of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands, and will enable them to move toward their long sought goal of self-government in political union with the United States.

Sincerely yours,



Acting Secretary of the Interior

Honorable James T. Lynn
Director, Office of
Management and Budget
Washington, D.C. 20503