

WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Jack Marsh: in response to your
comment on the Northern Mariana
Islands statement, Bob Wolthuis
has made the attached change. Is this
o.k.

Judy Johnston 3/23

Handwritten signature and initials. The signature is a large, stylized 'J' followed by 'J'. Below it are the initials 'M'.

PRESIDENTIAL TALKING POINTS AT SIGNING OF MARIANAS COVENANT,
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 1976

The signing today of the Joint Resolution of the Congress approving the Northern Marianas Islands Commonwealth Covenant marks an important moment in our Nation's history. It reaffirms our commitment to the principle of self-determination. And it honors the freely expressed wishes of the peoples of these islands for political union with the United States.

Those wishes have been recorded formally through resolutions, referendums and petitions to the United Nations and to the United States, dating as far back as 1950.

We can be proud of the fact that open, democratic negotiations led to the Covenant.

The plebiscite, conducted in the Islands last June, resulted in a resounding 78.8 percent popular approval of the Covenant. Following months of open hearings, the final vote in the House and Senate reflected equally impressive majorities.

I congratulate all those involved in this process: the Marianas Political Status Commission, Ambassador Haydn Williams and members of the American Delegation and the distinguished members of the Senate and House (Interior) Committees concerned *concerned here with us today*

To the people of the Northern Marianas, I extend my personal greetings and my best wishes as you move closer to your goal of self-government within the political framework of the American family. I warmly welcome your eventual entrance into union with the United States.

As I sign this Bill, we might recall that these islands were once the scene of bitter armed conflict. My hope now is that they will contribute to the continuing maintenance of peace, stability, and friendship among all of the people and nations of the Western Pacific.

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