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CNMI wants to start 902 talks

CNS - The CNMI government has requested that the resumption of the Covenant negotiations with the U.S. government start on Saipan so that the new U.S. representative could see first hand some of the problems being experienced in the CNMI.

Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio suggested that the meeting with the new U.S. representative, Becky N. Dunlop, who is the Deputy Under Secretary of the Interior, be held sometime this month to settle some of the long-standing controversies such as the tax-exempt status of CNMI bond issues and citizenship matters.

The negotiations were stalled since April of last year with

the resignation of former Assistant Secretary of Interior Richard T. Montoya and the CNMI government has been waiting for the appointment of a replacement.

"...The frustration of not being able to continue with the Section 902 consultations is felt not only by myself but our citizens," Tenorio stated in his July 7 letter to Dunlop. "A lawsuit recently has been filed in the U.S. District Court seeking a court order requiring that our prospective representatives meet and continue with the negotiations. I hope that the fact this case is pending will not delay any meetings between our representatives but rather by meeting at the earliest possible time to set an agenda

may make the lawsuit moot and the Commonwealth, as a defendant, could move to have the case dismissed."

The Governor said he hopes the meeting resumes promptly in order for the consultation process to fulfill the good faith promise of the Covenant.

The CNMI was made aware of Dunlop's appointment from a press release issued by the Department of Interior earlier this year. The Governor said he has received a letter from Dunlop July 1 notifying him of her pending appointment from the White House, but that neither he nor the Lieutenant Governor have received an official appointment letter from the U.S. government

