



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TWENTY-SECOND NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION, 2021

LEGISLATIVE JOURNAL

4th Day, First Regular Session

Friday, March 19, 2021

The House of Representatives of the Twenty-Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature convened its Fourth Day, First Regular Session on Friday, March 19, 2021 at 2:33 p.m., in the House Chamber on Capitol Hill, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Honorable Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez, Speaker of the House, presided.

A moment of silence was observed.

ROLL CALL

The Clerk called the roll and all twenty members were present.

The Chair directed the members to item II, Public Comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following individuals made comments:

Mr. Juan L. Babauta, Director – Commonwealth Cancer Association

Mr. Fabian M. Indalecio (*first round*)

Ms. Tracy Norita, Director – Division of Revenue & Taxation (*on behalf of Secretary of Finance*)

Mr. Alex Sablan, *representing* Governor’s Council of Economic Advisers

Mr. Peter R. Muña

Ms. Marissa Flores (*first round*)

Ms. Amber Mendiola, Administrator – Non-Communicable Disease Bureau (Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation)

Ms. Angelica Sabino, Chief Dentist – Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation

Mr. Shawn D.R. Kaipat, Firefighter – Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services

Ms. Corina Magofna

Ms. Edith Deleon Guerrero, Senator – The Senate (22nd Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature)
 Ms. Florence Sablan
 Mr. Joseph M. Castro
 Mr. Fabian M. Indalecio (*second round*)
 Ms. Marissa Flores, Micronesian Legal Services Corporation (*second round*)

The Chair called for a short recess.

The House recessed at 3:45 p.m.

RECESS

The House reconvened at 4:07 p.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Alright members, we rise back to session and before we move down to the introduction of bills, I'm going to recognize the Floor Leader for the suspension of rules. We have communication coming in from the different agencies pertaining to some of the bills to our agenda. So, Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader made a motion to suspend Rule III, Section 6.

RULE III. SESSIONS AND MEETINGS.

Section 6. Notice of Sessions.

Not less than 72 hours prior to convening a Regular or Special Session, the Speaker or a majority of the members of the House, shall file a written public notice of the date, time, and place of a session with the Clerk and post the same at the executive branch administration building and the Legislature's web site. When possible, notices under this section shall be given to at least one newspaper of general circulation. Notices shall contain an agenda of items to be considered at the session. Final disposition shall not be taken on any other matter at such session. Once filed as part of this notice, and agenda may only be changed by adding items thereto by the recorded vote of the majority of the members of the House.

The motion was seconded.

There was no discussion; the Chair recognized the Clerk for a roll call vote.

The Clerk called the roll on motion to suspend Rule III, Section 6 with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	yes
Representative Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao	yes
Representative Celina R. Babauta	yes
Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta	yes
Representative Ivan A. Blanco	yes
Representative Joel C. Camacho	yes
Representative Vicente C. Camacho	yes
Representative Angel A. Demapan	yes
Representative Joseph A. Flores	yes
Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero	yes
Representative Richard T. Lizama	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	yes

Representative Edwin K. Propst	yes
Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan	yes
Representative John Paul P. Sablan	yes
Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas	yes
Representative Leila Haveia F. C. Staffler	yes
Representative Denita K. Yangetmai	yes
Representative Ralph N. Yumul	yes
Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez	yes

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, all 20 members voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: All 20 members voting “yes,” the motion hereby passes.

The Chair directed the members to item IV, Introduction of Bills.

ADOPTION OF JOURNALS

None

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

House Bills:

Representative Donald M. Manglona officially introduced the following bill and request that the bill will be placed on the Bill Calendar:

H. B. NO. 22-33

To require legislative appropriation for all Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund monies allocated for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands by the U.S. Congress pursuant to Title VI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 801 et seq.) as amended by [the American Rescue Plan]; and for other purposes.

REP. DONALD M. MANGLONA of Rota, Precinct 7 (*for himself, Representatives, Celina R. Babauta, Richard T. Lizama, Edwin K. Propst, Christina M.E. Sablan, Leila H.F.C. Staffler, and Denita Kaipat Yangetmai*)

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Manglona. I recognize the Floor Leader for the proper motion.

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With that, I will offer a motion to suspend Rule IX, Section 8 referrals of bills and resolution to place House Bill 22-33 on today’s bill calendar. So move.

RULE IX. BILLS, RESOLUTIONS AND AMENDMENTS

Section 8. Referral of Bills and Resolutions

(a) Bills and resolutions shall be read by title upon introduction and (except as provided in subsection (b), the Speaker shall refer such measures to an appropriate committee or to more than one committee, jointly or sequentially. The Clerk shall endorse such reference on the measure before duplication and shall enter such reference upon the Journal. In the case of error of reference, correction may be made by the House, with debate,

immediately after the reading and approval of the Journal, by unanimous consent, or upon motion of either committee claiming jurisdiction or the committee to which the measure has been erroneously referred.

(b) The Speaker may place a resolution directly on the Resolution Calendar, rather than refer it to a committee, subject to appeal to the House.

The motion was seconded.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: A motion has been made to place House Bill 22-33 on calendar and has been seconded. Discussion? Recognize Representative John Paul Sablan.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, when we have our last session a couple of days ago, I want to ask the mover what is the sense of urgency and the rush of putting this piece of proposed legislation to the bill calendar. The other thing we have communications from the Department of Finance and the Office of Attorney General spoke about the proposed legislation. I think it's very important Mr. Speaker and members that we dilute such a communication as it relates to the proposed legislation. So, I wanted to ask if it's not too much to ask the mover that if he could consider that we refer this proposed legislation to the Committee on Ways and Means so that he can meet with the agencies that are making comments with regards to House Bill 22-33. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Sablan. I recognize the author Representative Donald Manglona.

Representative Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Rep. John Paul's question, my position remains, but the urgency of this bill is that in order for the funds to come in we need to see a spending plan from the Governor and what we're trying to do is to ensure accountability and transparency in doing so by allowing the legislature to approve the spending plan. So with that, the concerns brought up last session is that we get comments from these agencies and I went out and sought these comments and I provided it to the members today and I believe it will be submitted for – under communications and so with that said, I stand by my earlier position. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Representative John Paul Sablan.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the response from our good colleague from the 1st senatorial Representative Donald Manglona. I'm just a bit really concerned because some of these communications from the departments that our good colleague has solicit comments are proposing that there's no need for such proposed legislations to be passed and he mentioned earlier that part of this American Rescue Plan, the only requirement that is needed here is the spending plan from the Administration. It does not necessarily need that we appropriate such a funding. So, I just want to state that for the record Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative John Paul. Any other member under discussion? Recognize Representative Lee Guerrero.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our colleague here the author alluded that the Administration provide a spending plan. The last session, my statement was has anyone received a plan from the Administration and I haven't seen one. I think to

effectuate this piece of legislation so we can say that whatever the spending plan of this administration let's put it in this piece of legislation that way it solidifies the legislation itself that this is how the spending plan. Just like when the Administration enact a budget proposal. Everything is spelled out stipulated, how this money is going to be used. I think that's the proper way. None of us have seen the spending plan, but we're ready to enact a piece of legislation. Why can't we wait for a spending plan? Has anyone reached out to the Administration for a spending plan? That's the question that we should be asking ourselves. What's the purpose of this piece of legislation if there's no spending plan? I know for a fact that the \$3.9 Trillion that the President signed, there's strict stringent in how this money is going to be spent and as the state, which is the Governor it puts him on the spot that if he uses this money not as stated on the bill itself then he's responsible to answer. So again, I kind of would like to see the spending plan incorporate in this piece of legislation to solidify this legislation. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Leepan. I recognize Representative Christina Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. The motion that's being sought is to place this bill on calendar and I would like to respectfully ask that we dispose of that motion. We can get to the merits of the bill if and when this bill gets to the calendar and at this time I think we're getting ahead of ourselves and rather than rehashing the same arguments that were already made just a couple days ago in our session here again on the issue of whether to place this on the calendar, can we please move forward, take a vote and go from there? Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Sablan. I recognize Representative Sheila Babauta and then Rep. Ivan Blanco.

Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you to the author Rep. Donald Manglona for providing the comments to us members and I also want to thank the agencies that provided such comments on short notice. I believe there is a sense of urgency, there is a motion currently on the floor. I do support pushing this and placing it on calendar because the law was already signed by President Biden in the coming weeks we can expect the funding and so that is why there is a sense of urgency. There is still a process for the bill to move through the Senate and so I support placing this on the calendar and I'm ready to vote Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Sheila Babauta. I now recognize Representative Ivan Blanco.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to reiterate the reason why we keep rehashing the arguments is because there's not enough information or discussion on this bill to place it on calendar and I think it is prudent that this bill be discussed over with agencies including every member of this body so we can come to a consensus how to move forward with it. That is the only reason why in our last session I made the motion that we have the Speaker refer the bill to the proper committee which is Ways and Means. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Blanco. Any other member?

Several members voiced “ready.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Alright the motion is on the floor to place House Bill 22-33 –

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: Mr. Speaker, may I?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Representative Blanco.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: I just want to ask the question whether placing this bill on calendar without referring to the committee is a move by those persons who want to place it on calendar that there would not be any discussion on the bill – further discussion on the bill in committee.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Rep. Sheila Babauta.

Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason I support placing it on the calendar is because of the sense of urgency. We always encourage discussion, we always encourage debate on the floor. Right now the motion that stands is – the motion on the floor is to place it on the calendar, that is something I support so that we can continue this conversation – this debate when the bill is on calendar. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Rep. Babauta. Rep. Blanco.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Madame Chair Babauta but the way I’m seeing this by placing this on calendar we essentially not allowing further review of the bill or any other comments from other members for us to reach a consensus on how to move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: I think that’s where the discussion is going to happen on calendar. That’s where the debate and discussion will have to take place. Yes, go ahead.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: Well, thank you Mr. Speaker. Yes Sir, I understand that but that’s where the debate happens on the merit of the bill, but the further research on the bill usually happens in the committee. Most of the bills that were introduced were probably ninety – also a percent of them will be referred to committee for further work and I would just like to state that I feel we do not want to discuss this bill further in committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Blanco. Representative Propst.

Representative Edwin K. Propst: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. I do want to remind my dear colleagues that this is for several of us not our first rodeo. We’ve been at this before where we’ve passed legislation in the past on First and Final Reading and we’ve been told the same thing that we will discuss the merits and debate it when the bill comes up for debate and when we are going to debate it. I think we’ve explain ourselves about the sense of urgency of this and obviously we have very deferring opinions on it but we have very deferring opinions on

it, but we might as well dispose of the motion that was said earlier and I move for that again. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Propst. Recognize Representative John Paul.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Before we take the vote. Can we ask the Floor Leader to reiterate the suspension of pertinent rules?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you. Recognize Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's to suspend Rule IX, Section 8.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Thank you. So clarified.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative John Paul Sablan.

There was no further discussion and the motion to suspend Rule IX, Section 8 and to place House Bill 22-33 on the Bill Calendar was carried by a majority "aye" voice vote. There were several "nay" votes.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Can I call for a quick recess.

The House recessed at 4:21 p.m.

RECESS

The House reconvened at 4:22 p.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: We rise back to session. I apologize for that members just for clarification since the Floor Leader and the motion was to suspend the pertinent rules to allow for communications that were not submitted within the 72 hours, I just want to ask the members if there are any other communications or unnumbered bills they would like to put on today's agenda. Recognize Representative Leepan.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: If there's no objection Mr. Speaker, I would like to place 22-5, which has been requested by the office of planning development. This piece of legislation was vetoed by the Governor with respect to the reporting. The Counsel needs to meet as we speak to develop western Garapan and this piece of legislation is still sitting in committee and it's not a complicated legislation. Most of us that were here voted for it and I appreciate it if we can place it on calendar. So move, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Quick recess.

The House recessed at 4:24 p.m.

RECESS

The House reconvened at 4:27 p.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Alright we rise back to session and again as mentioned before recess the suspension of pertinent rules regarding communications and unnumbered bills, resolutions that did not meet the 72 hours if there's any other member out there who would like to introduce it for today's agenda.

Several members voiced "ready."

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Ready? Okay. So we move forward to item V, Introductions of Resolutions and I recognize Representative Blanco.

House Local Bills: None

House Legislative Initiatives: None

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

House Resolutions:

Representative Ivan A. Blanco officially introduced the following resolution and request that the resolution be introduced as a Committee of the Whole:

H. RES. NO. 22-5

To extend our sincere condolences and sympathies to the family of the late Bob Reynolds and to honor his memory whose worthy endeavors contributed to the quality of life in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

REP. IVAN A. BLANCO of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for himself*)

Several members voiced "no objection."

The Chair placed House Resolution 22-5 on the Resolution Calendar.

House Joint Resolutions: None

House Commemorative Resolutions: None

House Concurrent Resolutions: None

The Chair directed the members to item VI, Messages from the Governor and recognized the Clerk.

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Clerk announced the following Message from the Governor:

GOV. COMM. 22-22: (received 3/16/2021) **Executive Order 2021-05 – RENEWAL–**
Declaration of State of Public Health Emergency and continued Declaration of State of

Significant Emergency establishing response, quarantine, and preventive containment measures concerning coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19); and RENEWAL—Order directing the Homeland Security & Emergency Management Office through the CNMI COVID-19 Task Force in partnership with the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation to undertake necessary COVID-19 containment measures by means of the development of Emergency Directives to protect the health and safety of the public.

(REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND WELFARE)

The Chair referred Governor’s Communication 22-22 to the Committee on Health and Welfare.

There was no discussion; the Chair directed the members to item VII, Senate Communications and recognized the Floor Leader.

SENATE COMMUNICATIONS

The Floor Leader made a motion to accept Senate Communications 22-7 and 22-8 so they may become property of the House.

SEN. COMM. 22-7: (3/16/2021) Transmitting for House action S. B. NO. 22-21, entitled, “*To repeal and reenact 3 CMC § 1132 to clarify that the State Board of Education has the authority to establish and amend the minimum instructional time for PSS; and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate on March 12, 2021. [**For action**]
(REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION)

SEN. COMM. 22-8: (3/16/2021) Transmitting for House action S. B. NO. 22-26, SD1, entitled, “*To amend 1 CMC § 2263 to require a special election to fill a Board of Education vacancy; to clarify when an elected member of the board must resign from his or her PSS employment; to amend 1 CMC § 6502(f); and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate on March 12, 2021. [**For action**]
(REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION)

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader made a motion to accept Senate Communications 22-7 and 22-8 so they may become property of the House.

The motion was seconded.

There was no discussion and the motion to accept Senate Communications 22-7 and 22-8 so they may become property of the House was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair referred the following Senate Communications accordingly:

- *Senate Communication 22-7 (S.B. 22-) referred to Committee on Education*
- *Senate Communication 22-8 (S.B. 22-) referred to Committee on Education*

The Chair directed the members to item X, Miscellaneous Communications and recognized the Clerk.

HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS

None

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

None

COMMUNICATIONS FROM DEPARTMENTS & AGENCIES

The Clerk announced the following Communications from Department & Agencies:

Dept./Agcy. Comm. 22-10: (03/18/21) Department of Finance comments on House Bill 22-33. [*for info*]

Dept./Agcy. Comm. 22-11: (03/18/21) Office of the Public Auditor comments on House Bill 22-33. [*for info*]

Dept./Agcy. Comm. 22-12: (03/19/21) Office of the Attorney General comments on House Bill 2-33. [*for info*]

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. Any discussion?

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Can we have the – can we have the Clerk number it which on is one or two.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. Department and Agency 22-10 reflects Department of Finance comments. Department and Agency Communication 22-11 reflects OPA comments and lastly Department and Agency Communication 22-12 reflects the AG's comments.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Thank you, Madame Clerk.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Sablan and thank you Clerk.

There was no further discussion; the Chair directed the members to item XI, Miscellaneous Communications and recognized the Clerk.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk announced the following Miscellaneous Communication:

MISC. COMM. 22-17: (3/16/2021) Transmitting a certified copy of TALD Resolution No. 22-3, entitled, “*To commemorate the distinguished and honorable life of the late Joaquin Hoashi Borja and to recognize his years of exceptional service to the people of Tinian.*”, which was adopted by the Tinian and Aguiguan Legislative Delegation on March 11, 2021. [*For info*]

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Members we would like to take care of some bills so we will skip the Resolution Calendar and proceed first with the Bill Calendar. Recognize Representative John Paul.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I ask, what is the reason why behind that we need to skip the resolution calendar. I think we have two for action today that's what is being introduced today and the proposed rules, amendments. Can we have an explanation for the record why are we skipping the amendment for the House Rules?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: As we discussed in the leadership, we would like to tackle on the House Bills before we get on the rules. There are some bills – I know there's a bill there that will be very contentious and other bills that are not as contentious and we would like to take care of those bills before we do the rules.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: If I may Mr. Speaker and that is my great concern because our official rules right now is very disadvantageous right now for some of these bills in the event it goes in a tie and I wanted to clarify. I mean we should tackle the proposed amendment by the ad hoc, I know that the ad hoc committee that you created have worked so hard for the amendments for our House rules and I really encourage that we start debating or deliberating on these proposed amendments.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative John Paul Sablan. Recognize Representative Tina Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Representative Sablan for asking the question. To reiterate the view of the Speaker and the other members of the leadership. We do have some pretty momentous legislation on the Bill Calendar. It's now at 4:30 and we haven't even gotten to the voting part yet. We have received quite a lot of public comments. We think that it's important to take up the bills on our calendar for all the reasons of urgency that have resided today as well as at our last session and we can come to the rules after we dispose of the bill calendar.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: I would like to recognize Representative Blanco.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. I understand that there is a certain clause that was added by our ad hoc committee and I commend them for their work that pertains to introduction of bills and their movement of such whereby any bill that's introduced must go to committee and further that if there's questions on the bill it must lay for at least one legislative day prior to final passage. I'm just asking questions – is the reason why we're skipping the House Resolution 22-3 to avoid having placing House Bill 22-33, House Bill 22-19, House Bill 22-21, House Bill 22-46 to lay on calendar or to be referred to committee. Is that the reason why we're skipping the proposed House Resolution, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Rep. Blanco. As I stated earlier, the reason why we are jumping to the bill calendar is to act on these bills and we would like to prioritize these bills before the rules. Recognize Representative John Paul Sablan.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: I understand and I thank you for your explanation Mr. Speaker, but as I mentioned our existing official rules right now is disadvantageous for this body to act on a close vote and that disadvantageous is that when we get into a tie vote, you're the only one Mr. Speaker that can break the tie and that's the reason why I'm asking is that the reason why we're skipping the resolution calendar to avoid because the proposed House Resolution 22-3 changes those provisions and amended and this is the work of the ad hoc committee and I think it's important that we deliberate on it before we go to bill calendar. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Point of order.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: I think this debate now only reenforces our view that we should act on the bill calendar which is the call of the leadership which we discussed at length. There are bills of urgency that we'd like to dispose today and as you've already illustrated, Rep. Sablan, Leader Blanco, the rolls will be contentious as well. We could be here all night. Right now, as it stands, those rules are officially the rules of this house. We've been using them and we will get to that debate as well, I'm sure today or possibly in a future session, who knows. The priority for today are the bills on our bill calendar.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Representative John Paul.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for your explanation Representative Sablan, but if it's not too much to ask can we take a vote Mr. Speaker and the vote is to proceed to the Resolution Calendar or not and I recommend that we use a roll call. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Sablan and I call for a short recess.

The House recessed at 4:39 p.m.

RECESS

The House reconvened at 5:00 p.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: We rise back to session. Before we went on recess Representative John Paul Sablan had the floor and had a request. Representative Sablan would you like to restate that?

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My request can we take a vote – a roll call and the vote would be to act on the House Resolution 22-3 on the Resolution Calendar. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Several members voiced "no objection."

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you. Before we move on, thank you for that Representative Sablan, but under my authority on Rule II, Section (g), I have the authority in all points of order. We're not going to be completely skip the Resolution Calendar, we've in the past where we skip certain items and come back. So, I'm going to assert that authority and we're going to proceed with the Bill Calendar. Thank you very much. So on to the Bill Calendar I now recognize the Floor for the proper motion.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

None

REPORTS OF SPECIAL AND CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

RESOLUTION CALENDAR

H. RES. NO. 22-3

A House Resolution to amend the House of Representatives Rules of Procedure that was adopted on January 11, 2021; and for other purposes.

BILL CALENDAR

The Floor Leader made a motion to suspend Rule VII, Section IX and Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10.

RULE VII. COMMITTEES GENERALLY

Section 9. Committee Reports; Other documents

(a) Standing or Special Committees shall submit a written report to the Speaker within 60 days from the date the matter was referred to the committee, unless a shorter or longer time is ordered by the Speaker pursuant to a decision by the House Leadership. Subcommittees shall submit reports on matters referred to them as prescribed by the Standing Committee Chair. Standing, special and conference committees shall submit their reports in writing and provide an electronic copy to the Clerk who shall number the reports consecutively in the order received, cause such reports to be reviewed for legal sufficiency, reproduced, and furnished each member of the House at least twenty-four hours prior to the session at which it is to be considered. A committee report shall state findings of facts and conclusions based thereon together with a specific recommendation as to the manner in which the bill, resolution, or other matter referred to the committee should be disposed of by the House. A report recommending a bill or resolution for passage shall clearly state the purpose of the bill. A report on a bill or resolution shall show clearly any proposed amendments and the Clerk shall place such a bill or resolution on the appropriate calendar.

(b) A report shall be considered adopted by a committee when the Chairperson and a majority of the members of the committee have signed the report concurring therein. A

member or members not concurring in the report of the majority may so indicate by submitting a minority report which shall be attached to the committee report or by signing with "I do not concur".

(c) When a committee recommends that a bill or resolution be formally filed (indefinitely postponed), the recommendation is reported to the House floor as a committee report to be confirmed by majority vote. Adoption of the committee report by the members has the effect of officially filing the bill.

(d) When, by majority vote, the House adopts a committee report recommending favorable action on a bill or resolution, the bill or resolution as reported by the committee shall be placed on the appropriate calendar for House floor action.

(e) All documents, testimonies, or other evidence submitted to any standing or special committee or subcommittee in connection with any matter referred to the committee or subcommittee shall be the property of the House. The Chair of any committee or subcommittee shall deliver all such documents, testimonies, or other evidence to the House Clerk upon expiration of the term of the House.

RULE IX. BILLS, RESOLUTIONS AND AMENDMENTS

Section 9. First Reading of Bills and Resolutions

(a) When a bill or resolution is read in the House the first time, the Clerk shall report the bill by title, unless a majority orders it read in full, or by such subdivisions as the motion to read may indicate. The House shall then proceed to debate the measure, and no other amendment shall be in order until all committee amendments shown in the Committee Report are disposed of, except that such committee amendments shall themselves be subject to amendment. At the conclusion of a debate the House shall vote on passing the measure on First Reading after affording an opportunity for one motion to recommit with or without instructions. If the Measure passes with amendments, the Clerk shall engross such amendments and cause the measure, or any page thereof, to be reprinted as provided in Sections 4 and 6 of this Rule.

(b) If a bill passes First Reading, the Clerk shall place it on the Bill Calendar for Second Reading the next legislative day.

(c) First Reading of a resolution shall be the only and final reading, and upon its passage, the Clerk shall dispose of it pursuant to Section 14 of this Rule.

Section 10. Second Reading of Bills

(a) When a bill is read in the House a second time, it shall be considered in the same manner as for First Reading, except that further amendments shall be in order without regard to whether or not they are proposed by the committee reporting the bill.

(b) Second Reading of a bill shall be the final reading, and upon its passage, which shall be by Call of the Roll, the Clerk shall dispose of it pursuant to Section 14 of this Rule.

The motion was seconded.

There was no discussion and the motion to suspend Rule VII, Section IX and Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10 was carried by voice vote. There was no "nay vote."

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader made a motion to pass the following legislation:

H. B. NO. 22-33

To require legislative appropriation for all Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund monies allocated for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands by the U.S.

Congress pursuant to Title VI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 801 et seq.) as amended by [the American Rescue Plan]; and for other purposes.

The motion was seconded.

Under discussion; the Chair recognized Representative Donald M. Manglona.

Representative Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Colleagues and for the viewing public just a brief summary of this bill. The purpose of House Bill 22-33 is to require for a joint resolution approve the spending plan of the Governor and to also allow for a legislative appropriation for all monies allocated to the Commonwealth under the American Rescue Plan. Now, legislative appropriation is necessary to ensure that the Commonwealth receives payment by properly certifying through the Secretary of State that the funds will be spent for approved purposes under the American Relief Act of 2021. Other legislatures nationwide have passed or are considering passing similar legislation and implementing oversight and disbursement procedures relating to federal stimulus funds to ensure transparency and accountability. Now some concerns were brought up last session and those concerns were addressed through these communications that we received as well as the legal opinion by our legal counsel. The bill takes into account how the money is spent and to summarize that, the money that the American Rescue Plan seeks to fund the response cost associated with COVID-19 including assistance to household, small businesses and non-profits and to aid with tourism, travel and hospitality. It also seeks to provide premium payment for essential workers, funding for governments lost of revenue and huge investment in water, sewer and broadband infrastructure. It is clear that there are restrictions and these restrictions include that we should not use the funds to offset any deductions in net tax revenue as well as deposit these funds into any pension funds. With H.B. 22-33 we can work towards rebuilding an economy and strengthening our fiscal position today so that the commonwealth in the future has a better position when tourism comes back and when these have already been expended. Our legislative oversight serves as a check on the executive branch especially paramount in ensuring that the executive branch is carrying out the law as intended. Now, it is our duty to ensure that safeguards are in place so that these funds that are spent are in accordance with the law. This places the responsibility on the branches of government and not any one individual. In this process we're being transparent and this shows that we are being accountable for how these funds are spent and to ensure that none of these funds are misspent. So with that members, I seek your full support for the passage of this bill. We've heard from the public and it seems like majority of them supports this bill and the intention of this bill. I understand if you have read the comments from Department of Finance and the Office of the Public Auditor some of the concerns you know it seems like they weren't addressed also with the CARES Act funding. We haven't received reports on how the CARES Act funds were spent. So this legislation here is to allow for us to be part of the process in appropriating the funds as well as understanding how it's spent, where it's spent and so forth. So again, members, Mr. Speaker thank you for allowing me to explain more on this bill and again, I seek your support. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Manglona. Any further discussion? Recognize Representative Sheila Babauta.

Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Colleagues, we are a separate, but equal branch of government. To ensure the government is effective and citizens

rights are protected, each branch has its own powers and responsibilities including working with other branches and this is what this bill aims to do to work with the executive branch and provide us the legislature a seat at the decision making table. The \$515 Million Dollars that we are expected to receive in the coming weeks is a lot of money. That's more than five times the annual budget that we passed last fiscal year. This is about asserting our power of the purse and fully representing our constituents as set forth by the CNMI Constitution. This is not about party lines this is about full and equal representation. Other state and territories have implemented or are implementing some type of accountability measure or oversight over the millions and even billions of dollars these states and territories are set to receive and we here in the CNMI must do our part. We've heard there are federal laws and other obligations that may be imposed by the US, we've heard further authorization or appropriation is unnecessary. We've heard it is not required to receive these funds that we have that appropriation power. Yes, it is not required by the federal government, but it is required for checks and balance here in our Commonwealth. As we've heard today we represent the people of the Commonwealth. Let us examine our purpose, let us do what is good for the people we represent. This is about your local government, your local leaders. It is a time sensitive piece of legislation, it is now federal law, we can expect the funds to come into the CNMI in the next couple of weeks. This piece of legislation will require the Governor to submit that spending plan that some of our colleagues keep asking about. Submit that to the legislature for review and approval, not just for our House but for the Senate as well. This is very similar to the budget process. I believe this is one of our most important job as legislators is to hold the executive branch accountable. We each receive calls and messages from our constituents about their concerns and their own departments, their own funding sources and this is one way we can respond. \$515 Million Dollars is a lot. That is a lot. We can turn many things around, we can turn our healthcare system around, our education system, our public safety, all the foundations of a successful community and we have to do it together. We have to be at the decision-making table. One person to have all that authority is just not right. Right now, as we've heard during that one hour of public comment there is very little trust in our community, very little trust for this government. There's one way we can respond to our constituents and we can show them that we are working on building that trust. Building that trust together here in the House and with the executive branch. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Sheila Babauta. Recognize Representative Propst.

Representative Edwin K. Propst: Thank you for allowing me to make my comments. I don't have too much to add that was really excellent comments colleague thank you. I do want to say this that Mr. Fabian Indalecio said something earlier during the public comments had said "if it were a different Governor would this be a different case – if our delegate Congressman Kilili Sablan were Governor would we still all be the same?" I would absolutely want – regardless of whoever is the Governor to also have the ability to have that seat at the table. I think each and every one of us should have a seat at the table that's part of the reason why we're here. You know honestly, I'm surprise that the Governor wouldn't support this. Why wouldn't he reach out to us and say, "you know what? This is a lot of money; I want your help. Can you help me spend this insane amount of money that we're getting from the federal government so we can do it carefully?" As you mentioned congressman that we can build the trust of our people together and to do it without partisanship. We will discuss it, we will debate it and we will ensure funding is going to help the ones that need it the most – most especially. Not just big corporation that are going to be getting crazy sole source contracts or anything like that, but those in the community. Colleagues,

you know it, you guys are out just as I am when we meet with our constituents who are suffering, who have nothing. We have the ability to ensure that this money is spent wisely and prudently. I want to be a part of that. And I'm not going to make it political and I want to give my two-cents and represent my constituents to the best of my ability. I think each and every one of us should want the same thing to ensure that this money is being invested in our people. Most especially as we always talk about the most vulnerable. Those that can't even get assistance because of all sorts of reasons. These are the ones that I care most about because they are the ones that have no one to turn to and you know who they are because they've often call you as much as they do me and we want to give. Right now my dear colleagues we will be in this position to give and to ensure that we maximize this investment into our people into our Commonwealth. I hope we can look into this not as something that is partisan, not something that will divide us, but something that would unite us because we will be working together with the Governor and then we can make those decisions together as one body. I urge you to support this important bill. The intent also of this bill and to ensure that there are those checks and balances to help build the trust of our people. That's what I wanted to say. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Propst. Any further discussion? Representative Vicente Camacho.

Representative Vicente C. Camacho: This is more a common statement, but you know H.B. 22 is about \$515 Million Dollars you know money sent from heaven and our job as CNMI government is to protect this gift from heaven. I hope that as we sit here to make such a crucial decision that we realize that all that we do is for the people. I hope that our goal, our good judgement overrides our emotional judgement and pass this bill. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Camacho. Any further discussion? Representative Staffler.

Representative Leila Haveia F.C. Staffler: Thank you. The way I look at it H.B. 22-33 would establish that the money is coming from the Corona Virus State Fiscal Recovery Fund shall be subjected to appropriation by our legislature and establish a task force to monitor expenditures for this compliance. As we've heard over and over again, legislative oversight is the fundamental tool to check and balance the operations of our government, legislative oversight as a process seeks to ensure that the executive and it's authorized agencies remain responsive and accountable to the people, the people who put us in our chairs today. This is not something new. Many legislatures across the US have asserted their powers by limiting executive powers, either by changing executive order determination dates, shortening the length of days in emergency declaration or changing the scope of power, outlined indoor EO's. Legislatures have laws circulating now that would grant legislative authority to appropriate these federal Corona Virus state fiscal recovery funds, we are not alone. What is really interesting to me is that it is not something that only one party is doing. Across the US legislatures both Republican and Democrats are exerting their power of the purse. The reasoning these lawmakers give whether they're Republic or Democrats is that we are simply asking that the Governor include all others in decision-making processes. This legislation will allow for public input, this legislation will allow for cooperation among all three branches of government and ensure checks and balances. As we've been reminded by our public commentors this law only exerts the rightful authority of the legislature in accordance with the law and most importantly it will provide a new level of

transparency because as our colleague Representative Sablan referenced the AG response said – excuse me – as our colleague Representative Sablan referenced the AG’s response that while he’s right, we don’t need a law to access the money, we do need a law enabling legislation for oversight and that’s what this law will do. The urgency of this legislation is that the money is coming and that we need to have that oversight in place in order to work towards restoring the trust in public, restoring the public trust in government. When I listen to the public commentators, thank you so much for coming today. I hear a consistent level of distrust. When I look at the data found from the 21st Legislatures Minority Report this further supports the mistrust that is festering within our community and we need to have a level of oversight with this bill. I thank you for letting me have this chance to support it.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Staffler. I recognize Representative Angel Demapan.

Representative Angel A. Demapan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have a short question for our counsel and I bring this up because when the rescue plan was first floated in congress there was word that we’re going to have two years to spend that money and for us in the CNMI it was two years to spend, two fiscal years’ worth of money maybe even high than our recent fiscal year. So, in moving forward with the idea of appropriating the rescue plan funds, I just want to ask clarification from counsel that our appropriation authority rest within the limitation of one fiscal year. If the answer is yes, does that mean we have to spend all \$515 Million Dollars in one fiscal year and that’s worrisome because I don’t think the Commonwealth is prepared to spend it in two years as provided by the rescue plan and by way or appropriation, we’re going to shorten that timeframe and there are a lot of issues that we are facing here in the CNMI and when we get to infrastructure project do we have the pool of workers here to make sure we complete our expenditure. I think we all want to spend this money. We all want to make that this money goes back to our community, but are we restricting ourselves by the fiscal year limitation of an appropriation spill. I think that is important to be clarified by counsel.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Demapan. Recognize Legal Counsel.

Legal Counsel Joseph Taijeron: I would of loved a lot of time to research and put a lot of thought into that question, which I think is very profound. My simple answer is I do not believe that there are any fiscal year limitations set forth by our CNMI constitution because as you mentioned these are federally issued funds and unlike our general fund and our general appropriation and our annual appropriation which is limited to the fiscal year – these funds outside the general fund outside our licensing fees and our locally generated fees which are limited by fiscal year, these funds are not as far as I can tell; limited to any CNMI fiscal limitations. So, I do not believe to answer your question directly that we would need to spend all this funds in one fiscal year.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Representative Demapan.

Representative Angel A. Demapan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In follow-up to Counsel’s response, I just also want to clarify when the time comes to appropriate the rescue plan funds, does this body have to appropriate a shotgun appropriation of the full amount or does this body

have the opportunity to appropriate it by the allowable expense that's listed in the rescue plan act.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Counsel.

Legal Counsel Joseph Taijeron: I think the latter. There is no requirement for an omnibus all expending one shot resolution. I believe we can do something more to it. The federal government does and pass a budget for education, pass a budget for transportation if we so choose that route. One thing I didn't say earlier in my previous response and I don't want to open up a can of worms is I see this as very much like a grant and when the grant perimeter says "spend it within two-years" then we do not require the CNMI government to spend it in less time than what the grant itself provides. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Counsel. Demapan?

Representative Angel A. Demapan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I yield.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Demapan. Recognize Representative Christina Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just quickly to address Rep. Demapan's question. I do agree with you Counsel and the way the language of the rescue plan act reads it also makes it clear that the Governor would have to certify the use of those funds and then the Secretary of Treasury would have the authority to withhold a portion of those funds and so by the same token as we entertain this legislation it shall come to pass. You know there could be multiple certifications of these funds. There could be multiple spending plans to come to this body for review and approval. There's a deadline for 2024, so two-years under the rescue plan to spend all of it, but nothing in the rescue plan that says we have to do it all in one fiscal year. In fact, the way it read now it suggest that nobody is expected to spend everything that they're getting in state and local recovery funds all in one fiscal year. So that's to address that point and to go to broader merits of the bill if I may Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Continue.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Colleagues, these incredible and historic windfall of Corona Virus state and local recovery funds is coming to our Commonwealth through the American Rescue Plan Act as colleague Representative Sheila Babauta said that is five times our current annual budget and as we have just discussed, we have two-years to spend it. Do we have the legal authority to pass this legislation to appropriate these funds and exercise oversight on how they are spent? The answer is, yes. Our Legal Counsel's analysis is very clear and very straight forward. We are the legislature, our authority is in the Constitution it's in the planning and budgeting act it's been done before, it's being done now as Representative Leila Staffler articulated so well, as Chairman Donald Manglona also explained other state and territories are already acting on legislation that grants budget authority, exercises oversight over exactly this pot of money as well as previous federal stimulus funds that have gone to those states. We are not the only ones considering taking action like this. So this bill 22-33 and how we act on it really turns on two issues. One is the willingness of this legislature to assert its power of the purse as a coequal branch of government and the other is trust. House Bill 22-33 proposes to

assert legislative authority over one specific and massive pot of money the state and local fiscal recovery funds. Should one person, the Governor be the sole decision maker for how half a billion dollars shall be distributed. These funds can be used to respond to the public health emergency or its negative impacts, economic impacts it can be used to provide premium pay to eligible essential workers to provide government services that have been impacted by revenue shortfalls as a result of this pandemic and to invest in infrastructure. Should one person should be responsible for deciding all of that? If your answer is yes colleagues, our answer is why? We are the legislature. We are the representatives of the people. We answer to our constituents and they expect us to act like we represent them like we are in fact a separate and coequal branch of government. We have a responsibility to proactively assert the power of this legislature, the power of the purse and determining the distribution of this fiscal recovery monies. We should all have a seat at that table. We should all have an interest in provide checks and balances regardless of our party affiliation. And to go back to this issue of trust, consider the track record of this administration colleagues for extravagant waste and abuse of public funds. Illegal first-class travel, questionable sole source contracts and reimbursements, unlawful overtime and double compensation for top officials, five straight years of deficit. As Chairman Manglona said, we still haven't seen the expenditure report for the CARES act and we asked for that months ago. Colleagues, for those of us who haven't had a chance to see it. If I may Sarge. I'd like to pass out the minority report on the Governor's expenditures since January 2015. The House Minority in the 21st legislature reviewed thousands of pages and found multiple violations of law and abuses of public money by this Governor in travel, reimbursements, official representation and other expenditures. If you haven't had a chance to read it please do. That's why we're here also talking about these issues of trust, that's why so many members of the public here in the gallery, online and personal phone calls and conversations with each one us. That's why there are issues of trust and that's why important that we rebuild that trust, that is our responsibility as well. So, given this history, given what we've learned from experience and the work there is still to do to provide accountability for the people's money. Of course, there are issues of trust and how this administration will spend half a billion dollars. Let's not turn a blind eye colleagues. Let's not give a blank check. We are the legislature, let's do our jobs. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Rep. Sablan. Further discussion? Recognize Representative John Paul Sablan.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know the real question here should be, why are we debating this proposed legislation? And the real answer, simple answer is that the American Rescue Plan Act of 2020 does not require an appropriation from states from the territorial area and the states from the US national US mainland. As alluded by our Attorney General and his comments that an enactment of a common law is not required. Our Legal Counsel stated earlier that he looks at this like a grant, just like other previous grants that we received years and years ago. There are in place requirements on how to spend these funds that's where accountability is. There is reporting requirements of every awarded grants that we received not only here in the Commonwealth the whole entire nation including the territorial areas. Some of our members alluded that we only have a limit of two-years to exhaust this funds and having to have the committee deliberate on an appropriation of such funds – even this proposed legislation the Committee of Ways and Means does not have the time to even deliberate in the Committee of Ways and Means and now we're supposed to believe that when this legislation is enacted they're going to do so? You know, there is a real intent for this money in the American Rescue Plan – the name itself is to rescue every territorial and state with their

economy. The importance to quickly infuse this funding so that we can stimulate our economy and help every state government of the United States. So, I ask you guys please consider to stick with what the US Congress had decided to distribute these funds. There's a reason, I'm not to sure what the reason why is that they didn't give the state legislative the powers to appropriate before using the funds. It's just my personal feeling that they want these funds quickly infused into every economy of US territory and the United States. So, I want to state for the record that I'm not in support of this legislation. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative John Paul Sablan. Any further discussion? Recognize Representative Leepan.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is going to Counsel. Counsel, the House leadership seek your legal opinion on two points. One is the appropriation and the other one is the 25% for PSS and both response you came out saying yes. What guarantee or assurance that PSS is not going to take this to court and drag it before we exhaust this \$515 Million? Has anyone seek the PSS input in this? Do we have supporting document that PSS say "we're not going to worry about the 25% because this belongs to the state." I do understand that PSS got \$160 Million Dollars and plus what guarantee because the previous legislation they've been always suing the 25% belongs to them. So what guarantee is this piece of legislation that it's not going to invoke their 25%. The other is if this pass and goes to the Governor – the AG had provided comment already. If the AG recommended to the Governor to veto then what? It comes back to the legislature for an override. Do we seek the input of the Senate? Do you think that the Senate is going to just say we're going to accept the position of the House? What if they come back with extra baggage and say this is what we want? Then what? Then what? How can you unwind that when they have a list said that this how much, this plan is what we want? Are we ready to accept the Senate version? It goes to conferee. When it does or a special committee, when it does, do you notice the timeline that went above, how many months just to get things to settle? The dust to settle. We've been through this especially us incumbent. This is what we need to figure out and Counsel, do you agree with the AG's opinion or not?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Counsel.

Legal Counsel Joseph Taijeron: I agree with the AG's opinion that there's no legislation that the CNMI government needs to pass or enact for these funds to come into the CNMI Treasury that's the only decision that Deputy Attorney General Tenorio reached.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: So I'm assuming that if this bill reaches the Governor and the Governor would ask the AG "what is your recommendation?" and the AG says, "veto it" then what?

Legal Counsel Joseph Taijeron: That's a different question, but you know the Governor can take the advice of the AG and he can accept it or reject it, but the question that you asked was what the AG opinion stated and if Deputy Attorney General Tenorio's opinion is there is no legislation needed for these \$515 Million Dollars to come into the CNMI, I would have to concur with that opinion.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: I'm pretty sure it's going to be the same comments from the AG that the AG would submit to the Governor because the AG has reviewed the

context of the this 1.9 recovery rescue plan. We want to exhaust this money and I do understand that we need to keep in check accountability the administration, but they have a finance office that does that. Department of Finance is responsible to oversee this funding. So, I'm going back to you legal opinion, are you certain that this 25% that PSS is not going to come here and say "25% of this belongs to us?"

Legal Counsel Joseph Taijeron: To answer that question, I can honestly tell you I have no idea what PSS position will be. I wouldn't be surprised if they do try to assert as much money – to assert power over as much money as possible. I can't tell what their Board of Education will decide to do. I stand from my analysis if and when that's challenged in court if you look at a very straight forward reading of the certified question to which PSS was a party, the nature of these funds it just screams special revenue. It has four do's and two don'ts. Its very restrictive in the do's and even more restrictive on the don'ts. It doesn't say these are general revenues spend it as you would like. You have all the prerogative in the world. It doesn't say that.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: You answered my question because then we don't need House Bill 22-33 because it's in this there's restriction to it in terms of reporting and certification. It was written in these 698 pages. You know there are stringent guidelines that the territories must follow and we're not exempted from the rest. I do understand that it should be the legislature appropriating this for transparency and accountability, but at the end of the day how quickly can we put it in motion in action? Let's say that we have the authority, the power to appropriate funding based on the Governor's plan. How quickly can we move this from this House to the Senate and there's amendment from the Senate. We have to be mindful on those that's my concern. We can talk about the House, but has anyone reached out to the Senate and the Senate says, "it's okay, don't worry when it get's here we will definitely pass it with no hiccups." How many pieces of legislation went to the Senate and it sat there until they can figure out when to act on it or they act on it and send it back to the House with a totally different version. Who knows maybe my colleague Manglona's bill would be a Senate Draft. It would be a Senate Draft, are we going to be content with that? I don't think so. So, colleagues before we vote on this think of that. I'm not saying I don't support the intent to account the administration for the spending of this, but we must make sure that when we do pass this piece of legislation that the administration is going to sign and agree to it without any line-item veto. That's the concern. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Leepan. I recognized Representative Ivan Blanco and I apologize with the screen sometimes I –

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: You're hiding from me.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: You're hiding from me. No. Recognize Representative Blanco.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Counsel, we apologize that we have so many questions to ask about this bill and that is the only reason why I had asked that we send it to committee so that we can have an opportunity to ask questions in fact there is one question that's been raised. If we pass this bill and it becomes law, does this set a precedence for this body to reach out to PSS \$160 Million Dollars and appropriate the way we want to see it? Or even NMC's \$60 sum Million Dollars?

Legal Counsel Joseph Taijeron: You know I can answer that question honestly, yes and no. It will set some precedence that this legislature is taking an active roll in accountability and transparency over \$515 Million Dollars and I think that's a proper exercise if it's a separation of power and power. No that on the other hand when NMC gets it's grant money the President knows exactly how it should be spent and the legislature can exercise its difference to trust that they're going to spend the money correctly and that PSS when it gets it's \$160 Million Dollars will spend the money in accordance with the grant perimeters. The legislature if necessary can then come in and oversight if necessary and we've done so when there's a maintenance of effort that they come in and they say "we need \$39 Million Dollars for PSS and you only gave us \$33" and we've come in to save the day because they didn't plan accordingly or the Governor shortchanged them somehow, they didn't get the allotment when they actually got the appropriation. So we've exercise not only oversight, but assistance to PSS for instance. So, I can understand your concerns that this establishes a precedent, I don't necessarily think that it establishes a bad precedent that the legislature is actually asserting the power of the purse.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: Right. It's not a concern that I raise it's a question –

Legal Counsel Joseph Taijeron: I think it does establish a precedent then.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: That we can reach out to PSS and say, "Hey, PSS guess what? We're going to appropriate \$165 Million Dollars of your funding" but anyway you already answered my question and thank you for that. Mr. Speaker, if I could continue?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Please continue Representative Blanco.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: I understand the intent of this bill is to ensure accountability, efficiency and transparency of these recovery funds. I understand that there is ongoing communications with the leadership of both houses with the administration. This also includes the mover of the bill, my good Chairman of Ways and Means. I also understand, comments were solicited from the AG, OPA and Department of Finance. The OPA in it's lack of support for the bill, proposed that this body require Finance to track the spending and report back to this body and OPA for the search it's independence again certain provisions of this bill. I'm going to state the facts from the comments provided. Department of Finance in it's lack of support of this bill sheds light that these funds are accompanied by rigorous reporting and oversight mechanisms within the federal government and are locally monitored by the US Treasury, inspected general and the US Treasury itself. Finally in the AG's Office again in its lack of support simply points out that this bill and I quote "is not required". What is required is to comply with the procedure set forth in section 602 (d) the use restrictions in section 602 (c) and other obligations that may be imposed by the US Secretary of the Treasury. So, with all do respect with the mover and cosponsors, may I respectfully propose that we work together as representatives for our people and with other stakeholders to come to a consensus on how to move forward with this bill. With that Mr. Speaker, I look forward with the mover to seriously consider moving this bill back to committee and him being the Chairman, he has the authority to fast track it. This is not a motion, but just a request. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Blanco. I recognize Representative Joel Camacho.

Representative Joel C. Camacho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do support the intent of transparency and accountability. My only concern is with regards to efficiency. Efficiency in getting these monies out to our people as quickly as we possibly can. The Governor recently came out from a memorandum that all furlough and RIF are going to be reinstated at the end of the month. I want to see that kind of efficiency moving forward that's why I can't support this bill. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Blanco. I mean Representative Camacho, I apologize. You guys look alike. Just kidding. Any further discussion? Representative Celina Babauta.

Representative Celina R. Babauta: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One moment please. Thank you. I am deeply concerned about the apparent pattern of misuse of millions of dollars in funding meant for public health emergencies like the one our Commonwealth has been confronting since last year. Instead it went to the purchase of all terrain vehicles and other unnecessary expenses. We all know that here. All twenty of us in this room know that. I can find no reason and I've heard your comments my dear colleagues; I can find no reason why the minority will support this bill except for the fact that they are a minority and so they will shift their powers to the executive branch. How is that not collusion? *Hafa linachi-ña para ta eksisisa direcho-ta guini gi san papa' na guma? Hafa linachi-ña enao?* What is so offensively wrong to have twenty sets of eyes in cooperation with the executive branch managing these funds. The legislature, specifically this body, the House of Representatives is an institution whose *raison d'être* is to appropriate funds. *Hafa linachi-ña enao?* Why are we not willing to do our job? Our sole mandate by the Constitution is to appropriate funds. The people are the first source of power. We have a Governor who is willing to leverage full power and money is power. You've heard me say that. To cripple the people of the Commonwealth to their knees through austerity and reduced hours while he travels like a king and we are the paupers. In the minority's report it sites a travel he performed with his spouse. Airfare alone was over \$22,000.00 airfare alone. that is higher than the salary of the Grant Writer at the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. I know that for a fact because they have reached out to me. Sighting the Secretary of Finance's comments specifically the fifth paragraph last sentence, the Secretary of Finance commented and I quote "thus the need to be treated as a grant" what this tells me is that they think it's a grant. They perceive it to be. It is not. There's no clear language here from the Secretary of Finance that it is a grant. He perceives it to be. He further states on the next paragraph and I will read most of that paragraph, that "The CNMI is a debt at the management and fiscal controls of federal funds and has this statutory obligation to ensure the prudent expense of these resources. We look forward to finalizing the spending plan for the CNMI in relation to these funds provided under the ARPA and anticipate cooperation with the CNMI Legislature." If we are not doing our job, how is this even – can be labeled as cooperation. The Governor has been using a real emergency as a window of opportunity to justify his executive powers that essentially scurred or suspend the constitution and dismantle civil liberties. This is what politics without guard rails looks like. We are here now. Executive Orders provide broad discretionary power to a Governor to determine how to enforce a law, but the constitution is clear *taya dinuda, ti siña mañega i* Constitution that making laws are the sole authority of the legislature and more specifically that appropriating funds are the sole authority of the House of Representatives and I'm absolutely certain that if we allow all constituents throughout the CNMI to come up here and speak of their suffering or speak

of their sentiments they will give each and every one of us five hundred and fifteen millions why this bill needs to pass. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Babauta. Representative Blanco.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank all the individuals who came to provide their valuable comments on this bill and the other bills, but I would like to recognize the lone person who came to raise concerns regarding House Bill 22-33, house Bill 22-19, I would like to recognize the Director of Tax and Revenue Tracy Norita. I think she was the only lone voice here with us. Just my final question and perhaps, Counsel I invite you if you have any comments to it. Will this bill if it becomes law, would it have any affect in light of the emergency declaration that we're currently in?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Legal Counsel.

Legal Counsel Joseph Tajjeron: Can you restate your question please?

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: Okay, so if this bill becomes law, would it have any effect in light of the emergency declaration that we're currently in.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Counsel.

Legal Counsel Joseph Tajjeron: I don't see any legal conflicts. The Governor has made a declaration. If anything we just approve the spending plan if anything funds his priorities and funds the joint priorities of the legislature and the House. I mean, I understand Representative Camacho's point about efficiency, but we are at a stage of the pandemic where there's vaccinations coming out. We're talking about travel bubbles, we're talking about opening up the economy and we're not at the stage where we don't know anything. We know a lot about – so you don't legislate and administer funds the same way pre-pandemic, during the pandemic and post pandemic. If we do that the same type of efficiency that's needed is the kind of efficiency that might now be necessarily needed once things are slowing down and more deliberate thought is available. So, I hope that answers your question.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: Thank you, Counsel. Thank you, Speaker. I yield.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Blanco. Thank you, Counsel. Anymore further discussion? Recognize Vice Speaker.

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you colleagues for all your comments. A lot of good points that are brought up. Counsel, I have a few questions for you. You quote these funds as a grant in your earlier statement when it was posed by Representative Angel Demapan. Is that correct?

Legal Counsel Joseph Tajjeron: I said that with respect to the two years that there will be no fiscal limitations because like a grant with perimeters and specifications, we can understand that these funds like a grant can be expended over that period specified in the federal language. In that respect I would see it like a grant where we don't have to use our CNMI fiscal year

limitations to limit our spending to one shotgun bill for \$515 Million Dollars. We can legislate accordingly over the two-year span.

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you for that Counsel. Further, may I ask Counsel, who is the authorized Rep. of the CNMI when it comes to grants outside of the CNMI?

Legal Counsel Joseph Tajjeron: Unless otherwise stated it’s the Governor.

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: So, these quote-on-quote grant of \$515 Million Dollars and the \$160 that goes to PSS, the end result is the Governor’s signature necessary to accept these grants. Correct?

Legal Counsel Joseph Tajjeron: Yes, I believe as you state your question that to accept these grants that the Governor is the ultimate CNMI signatory. Yes.

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: So if this legislation 22-33 becomes law, would CNMI laws or the Constitution be considered when making the appropriations in the future?

Legal Counsel Joseph Tajjeron: Yes, I think so. We will never be able to do anything that’s unconstitutional.

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: I ask these questions colleagues, just my history so that colleagues can understand. I signed off on a letter to the administration when they requested for additional NOPS when they had grant money from the federal government. With the assistance of both our Counsels, Counsel Tajjeron and Counsel Cool; I signed off a letter saying that we don’t have the authority to expend those funds therefore external funds is within the administration’s prerogative to hire additional personnel for those monies. So, that’s my challenge with this legislation and according to Counsel this legislation or should it become law and any appropriations in the future these legislations would have to abide by CNMI laws and the Constitution. Correct Counsel?

Legal Counsel Joseph Tajjeron: That’s correct.

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you for that Counsel. So right off the bat if it does apply the CNMI Constitution and existing statutes of the CNMI we have to reserve \$128,750,000.00 for PSS, \$30,900,000.00 for NMC and \$5,150,000.00 for OPA. So, \$515,000,000.00 less \$164,800,000.00 is what we have to reserve right of the bat. I know everybody has a lot of concerns. Land compensation, CUC, healthcare, public education - \$160 Million Dollars might sound like a lot of money, but the proposal of PSS right now to the legislature is \$58 Million Dollars from the general fund. So, \$160 on top of the \$61 Million Dollars that they got two-weeks ago they’re asking for an additional \$58 Million Dollars. Wouldn’t it be prudent for PSS to also insert their authority by the Constitution to ask for the 25% in this \$515 Million Dollar appropriation? That’s something we need to consider as a body. I understand it’s a policy call and I question the Counsels regarding applicable statutes and our constitution. We have a lot of stuff that we need to take care of and this is a lot of money. We want to get it out. Two-years is a very short period of time and efficiency is what Rep. Camacho’s concern is then yes that should be our concern. When does the two-year time start ticking? When they sign it into law or when it hits our treasury over here. That’s not the concern

we need to think about. So, if the administration is going to propose a spending plan, I think that's the angle we can actually utilize. Take that spending plan, work on that spending plan if this is considered outside source and it does not apply to CNMI laws and the constitution then we can fill those holes in the spending plan. Take away what we think is not important by the administration and add what we believe is important as a body and I believe that would be the fastest way to get these monies out to the community. If the failure of the administration to provide a spending plan with the next 60-days then we have the power to create these committees to address these issues. We did it in the past legislature, our rules also locked us in because it capped in at 60-days maybe something we can consider when we get to the rules. So, with that members, I respect all of you guys opinions, I respect you guys opposition on this legislation and I'll never question your vote. I respect your vote. For the reasons that I've stated and Counsel stated to the questions I pose to him, I cannot support this legislation right now. The intent is really good, but the questions that Counsel answered already gives me reason why we should hold back. Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Vice Speaker. Counsel, did you want to respond?

Legal Counsel Joseph Taijeron: Just on the one narrow point that PSS would be constitutionally entitled to 25% of the \$515 Million, I believe and I just want to reiterate that based on the certified question and the definition of general revenue versus special revenue that because of the perimeters set forth by the federal government to the \$515 Million Dollar expenditure, I do not believe anybody could actually make a good faith legal argument that these are general revenues. Not PSS or anybody can make that argument with a straight face that with all these restriction, four do's and two don'ts that these funds would be considered general revenue subject to the 25% that PSS would be constitutionally entitled to. So if you in any way interpreted my answers to reflect that PSS would be entitled to that let me just be clear that I do not think that's the case. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Counsel. Recognize Vice Speaker.

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao: Thank you, Counsel for that but you had mentioned that the applicable statutes and the constitution would apply if we do an appropriation on this legislation.

Legal Counsel Joseph Taijeron: Yes, Vice Speaker and the applicable statutes and the constitution says that PSS is entitled by the constitution to 25% of general revenue and if these funds are general revenue then they take their \$128 Million, if they are special revenue then they don't. I've said over and over, I do not believe that there is any argument to be made that these funds are general revenue. So, under the CNMI Constitution, special funds are not within the 25% scope.

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao: Thank you, Counsel. May I Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize.

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao: Thank you, Speaker. And you're right Counsel. The unfortunate thing is that the courts had really loosened that opinion up when they came up with

the slip opinion. They actually brought up the issue that the 25% if it's reaching into earmark funds that were considered special when they were created right. And we don't live in a place where we have specific taxes that can address specific issues. We're not the US mainland where they have those kinds of opportunities. The framers of a lot of their statutes prior to us were creative enough in creating taxes or fees to address the pressing issues of the CNMI had at the time. With the slip opinion they're assuming that the 25% is also reaching into the gross revenue which is the top number on our general appropriations, correct? I understand and maybe we shouldn't put this on record, but since we're talking about it – the legislature had put a position out there the general revenues are inclusive of federal funds in the appropriations act. That's one of the reasons why PSS didn't want to take the legislature to court because they might actually lose out on their general appropriation of 25%. At this point the slip opinion is also considering reaching in to the gross appropriations of our budget. So with that I rest Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Vice Speaker. Rep. Sheila Babauta then Rep. Angel Demapan.

Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to first thank Legal Counsel for providing your opinion on the two issues that the leadership team did bring to your attention and that was whether the CNMI legislature had the authority to appropriate these funds and two are the funds provided by the rescue act considered special revenue and therefore exempt from the 25% constitutional provisions to the CNMI public system. We all got a copy. Thank you, Legal Counsel for providing both questions is yes. Again, this is a time sensitive of legislation. We have a time frame to spend these funds and that's why we must act on it now. We haven't even received the funds that's why we should be proactive and begin passing this working with our counterpart at the Senate and the administration because we know that there is a process. How long will it take? How quickly can we do it? It is up to us. For the viewing public it really is up to your leaders. We've done it before. It is about prioritizing, it is about communicating, it is about crossing the aisle and working together. Infusion of funds, efficiency, I hear you. We still have people waiting for their PUA, we still have vendors waiting for reimbursements. These PUA applications, these vendors, they reach out to us. I don't want that to happen again with these funds. The Governor is the sole authority, yes he signs off and if it is an unnecessary bill then why are other legislatures passing similar forms of legislation. We must assert our power of the House, our power of the purse, we must represent our community. Our community does not trust the Department of Finance, our community doesn't trust the Governor, our community doesn't trust the legislature. There is very little to no trust for the government. I thank Mr. Vice Speaker for bringing up your points about you know less \$160 Million that would still leave us with \$355 Million Dollars that's still times our budget. Why do we talk about PSS or – as if they're not part of this community. As if we don't have our own children, our own nieces and nephews attending PSS. We're not scrambling anymore, we're not fighting for crumbs anymore. So let us be accepting of this blessing from heaven, let us be abundant. This is an abundance. So, let us not separate other agencies, other organizations in our community. We are all connected and we learned that during this pandemic. There is no guarantee that our voices will be heard at that table when the spending plan is being formed. We can bring up our concerns, but there's no guaranteed that changes will be made because there is no law. This is the law that would require our voices at the table. I support this bill Mr. Speaker and I'm ready to vote. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you. Recognize Representative Demapan.

Representative Angel A. Demapan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is just a quick follow-up to the Vice Speaker's comments which I think are important to consider also. So, just listening to the Vice Speaker's comments, I think we have to make sure that we can address the uncertainties on whether this is general revenue or special revenue. I understand that our Counsel has issued an opinion, but we also seen a clashing of opinions when we get to different phases in this process and ultimately we will have an issue where certified question comes in and it delays the process and I think the Vice Speaker has raised many valid points and in that regard maybe in our quest in our effort in our desire to achieve efficiency, to achieve accountability, to achieve transparency and in our desire to preserve the power of the purse. Maybe we can consider legislation to require a House Joint Resolution to approve the expenditure plan put forth by the administration. The approval of the expenditure plan by way of a join resolution skips all the different processes of an appropriation especial here in a bicameral legislature. The approval of an expenditure plan by the administration through a resolution through the legislature is being done by majority of state legislatures as reference in the NCSL website on their reference to this. So I think that after hearing the concerns raised by the Vice Speaker I think that there is a way for us to hold people accountable to make sure this process is transparent without the hurdles of appropriation, but by the power of approving and concurring on the expenditure plan as a legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Demapan. Representative Leepan.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: Thank you, Speaker. Vice thank you for the clarification. Based on my calculation here, PSS is getting \$160 plus the \$66 Million plus – if this 25% comes up it will total \$382 Million. We're forgetting to mention that the budget act is coming forth in two-weeks – 25% of that goes again to PSS. What are they going to use this money for? The other day, I visited Hopwood, Kobler – the 42 unit of classroom was neglected by PSS. I went there with FEMA and they were disgusted that they spent \$6.2 Million Dollars and we're going to give PSS this money? This is a laughing joke. You know probably they got about the same amount, \$515 Million to spend lavishly. We can't agree in principle here. I agree with the Vice, this is an appropriation PSS is entitled with this 25% and we're going to be seeing, see you in court. We'll be the laughing stock. It's okay to give PSS more money. Let's give them the \$156 Million because that's only peanuts, loose change as they call it. I'm sorry, but I'm not going to give PSS anymore money, they have more money, more grants, they don't know how to spend the money. They should reopen the school and spend that money. Build the classroom that is needed. FEMA is approved already for their building of Hopwood, but what are they doing? So, if we're talking about this money, this money should be used for other means of the infrastructure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Rep. Leepan. Any – and I apologize, I should have brought this up earlier, but anybody for the first round. I apologize. I know a lot of it is responding too. If not, I recognize Representative Propst and Representative Tina Sablan.

Representative Edwin K. Propst: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel this is an exercise in futility. It's 6:00 p.m. We've heard all the different sides, but the truth of the matter is we all came in here and we can debate all night and we've already made up our mind. We had preconceived notions of this bill beforehand that includes myself. I was going to vote yes to this bill and I was prepared for it and I have yet to hear any convincing reason why I should vote no as is those who

oppose this bill will say the same thing. We don't see the reason why we should vote yes to this. So it's obviously a difference of opinion and that's where it stands. I do want to say this how interesting it is that when it comes to elections or right before elections the slogan "students first" comes up all the time and of course whatever left-over money we have we go and take our photos take donating to the school as if it's coming out of our own wallets, but it's all about students first. You know the truth is if PSS came after and say "I'm going to take 25% of that" go ahead, but we're going to ensure that you spend that money wisely and prudently just like we would with the Governor whether it's PSS or whoever. You want to take that 25%? We're going to be checking that you are spending that investing it in and as Congressman Leepan had mentioned about the portable condition that FEMA said was in the school, then we need to call that out and we need to discuss that. That should go to the education committee and we should call that out for all those reasons and intent and purposes. I don't feel that giving them 25% is throwing it away. You know what is frivolous money? Believing that we can fly somebody in do this thing, take money from MVA and other resources and believing that a person because he is a YouTube star is going to bring in a ton of visitors to the Commonwealth. How many have come since then? Well, wait but there's COVID. Wait a minute, we had no COVID cases for the longest time. We bragged about it. A case in study, CNMI rules, no COVID. If anything that should have attracted anybody to come out here, especially because the followers from Mr. Robert Arrington were mostly – are from the United States. So, it was a great thing it promoted the Commonwealth, but what did it result in? Did we see any revenue or any visits? As we said in his previous visit when he visited Rota. Did we see any actual revenue or anybody coming in from that? \$8 Million Dollars, that is the figure that we're looking at when it comes to over time. I said it during Soudelor, I said it – I'm sorry I said it during Yutu that this money that should not be spent, this is illegal overtime. Several of us raised objections to it, it was still carried out and we saw a lot of people getting overtime and \$8 Million Dollars is not reimbursable. I'm concerned. Deeply concerned that we're going to say, "well, there's already do's and don'ts so we're going to be ok guys". Wink, wink. But the truth is with in the perimeters of the do's and - don'ts there's a lot of wiggle room nonetheless. If there's a way to exploit this federal money such as an emergency soul source that's deeded for Vick or whoever from Guam, outside of the Commonwealth without even having a local business license to get a soul source when there are other local businesses that were readily available to provide PPEs who we met with by the way and they got nothing. And then some of these local vendors, sorry, are still waiting for payment, but we have all these federal money. We have this glorious check. Why can't we just let the Governor do as he pleases? Because we can't. Because that's way too much money, not for the Governor, but for any one person and that's my frustration about it that we can just throw our hands in the air and say, "Hey it's not us, we can do it because of this reason. PSS might take this, NMC might take this." Well then we just have to pray the Governor does all the right things, but based on past spending frenzies and other things tell us that we have to be cautious to rebuild that trust when it comes to spending. I don't see why is that a problem and if the Senate does not like this bill, well there's no guarantee that the Senate will pass it but we've done our part and we've passed it and handed it of to the Senate then the Senate has to answer to the people as we do. That's how legislation gets passed. We cannot just say, "well, we're not going to send this to the Senate until we get word from the Senate President that he will pass our bill." No, that's not our responsibility. Our responsibility is to ensure that it passes the House. And yes, we hope it passes the Senate and then the Senate can say whatever they want. Guys, I've said all I can, I think everybody have said all they can. I'm tired. My kids are Whatsapping me and I'm sorry for going on this long rant, but as the Secretary of Labor often says, "I'm hungry" and I

am. I'm frustrated. I'm frustrated because we are just spinning in circles and with that said, I welcome anybody to add in but I'm hungry and I hope we can vote on this soon. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Propst. Representative Tina for the last round.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Yes and just briefly. I agree with Representative Propst. We've gone around and around and explored all angles of this issue, but I do want to address a couple of things that I think needs some clarification. First is that if my colleagues in the minority believe that a joint resolution should be required for the spending plan then you should support this bill because that's exactly what this bill calls for. Under the American Rescue Plan Act, the Governor is required to submit a certification for the use of funds to the Secretary of Treasury, that is the spending plan. This bill would require the legislatures approval by joint resolution for that spending plan prior to the submission of certification. That's exactly what we're calling for. Colleagues, as soon as the Governor submits that certification on how these funds will be spent on that spending plan that we've all been talking about, by law Treasury has 60 days to transfer the funds. That certification can be made at any time. It could be made tomorrow. That is the time sensitive nature of this bill and as soon as this happens we do lose out on any opportunity to have a voice on how those funds will be spent. Second, on the issue whether this is general or special revenue, the law is clear. Our Legal Counsels opinion is not complicated. This is not general revenue. It's restricted, it's special revenue intended for specific purposes and even if PSS were to assert their 25% entitlement we can't control what they do. NMC, we can't control what they do but we do stand on very solid legal grounds for why these funds are not general revenue and why these carve outs will not be automatic. There was mention of OPA. OPA and their own comments, they are saying there is no automatic 1% carve out that's another constitutional obligation for general revenues and they're saying their 1% here will not be automatic. And on the subject of OPA, their comments are well taken. If anything it underscores the need more than ever for why we need to build the capacity of our agency, Office of the Public Auditor to do independent monitoring and oversight. They're saying half a billion dollars is a lot of money and we don't have the existing capacity now to monitor these funds and ensure compliance with the terms of these funds as provided by law. We would have the opportunity if we legislate it to ensure that OPA does have that capacity and is able to report to this body on the compliance of expenditures with the law. That's all I have to say to add more to this conversation colleagues, I am also tired and hungry and ready to vote.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Rep. Sablan. Further discussion?

Several members voiced "ready."

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Guys, I would like to request for a three-minute recess before we come back to vote. Real quick. Recess.

The House recessed at 6:24 p.m.

RECESS

The House reconvened at 6:39 p.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Alright, members we're back to session. Before we went on recess, I apologize we're back from recess. Before we went on recess there was – all discussions were done. The motion was on the floor to pass House Bill 22-33. I now recognize the Clerk for the vote.

The Clerk called the roll on motion for the passage of House Bill 22-33 on First and Final Reading with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	no
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao	no
Representative Celina R. Babauta	yes
Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta	yes
Representative Ivan A. Blanco	no
Representative Joel C. Camacho	no
Representative Vicente C. Camacho	yes
Representative Angel A. Demapan	no
Representative Joseph A. Flores	no
Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero	no
Representative Richard T. Lizama	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	yes
Representative Edwin K. Propst	yes
Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan	yes
Representative John Paul P. Sablan	no
Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas	no
Representative Leila Haveia F. C. Staffler	yes
Representative Denita K. Yangetmai	yes
Representative Ralph N. Yumul	no
Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez	yes (<i>voted twice to break the tie</i>)

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, 10 members voted “yes” and 10 members voted “no”.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk and before I declare the vote, under Rule XI, Section 10 grants me the authority should the – in the even that the tie happens that the Speaker may break the tie. Clerk, my vote is “yes.” I recognize the Clerk.

RULE XI. VOTING

Section 10. Tie Vote.

When the vote for and the vote against a proposition are equal, the Speaker may cast a second vote to break the tie. This provision shall not apply to the election of legislative officers nor to the matters of the organizational session as set forth in Title 1, section 1104e of the Commonwealth Code (1 CMC §1104).

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, 11 members vote “yes” and 10 members voted “no.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With a vote of 11 “yes” and 10 “no” House Bill 22-33 hereby passes the House.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Privilege Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: With the vote that you have declared, question to the Legal Counsel. Are we in conflict with the one-man, one-vote by the Speaker voting, breaking the tie? Can we hear your opinion on that?

Legal Counsel Joseph Taijeron: No, Representative Sablan. I do not believe we are in any conflict. Our House Rules provide for this. This is the rule that's been long standing. I don't believe there's any violation.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and if it's not too much to ask can I direct the Legal Counsel to put that in writing.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Sablan. Noted. Legal Counsel, please work on that request. Thank you. I now recognize the Floor Leader for the next House Bill.

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With that smooth debate, we are going to – so I offer a motion to suspend Rule VII, Section 9 Committee and Report and other documents and Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10 on Second Reading. So move.

RULE VII. COMMITTEES GENERALLY

Section 9. Committee Reports; Other documents

(a) Standing or Special Committees shall submit a written report to the Speaker within 60 days from the date the matter was referred to the committee, unless a shorter or longer time is ordered by the Speaker pursuant to a decision by the House Leadership. Subcommittees shall submit reports on matters referred to them as prescribed by the Standing Committee Chair. Standing, special and conference committees shall submit their reports in writing and provide an electronic copy to the Clerk who shall number the reports consecutively in the order received, cause such reports to be reviewed for legal sufficiency, reproduced, and furnished each member of the House at least twenty-four hours prior to the session at which it is to be considered. A committee report shall state findings of facts and conclusions based thereon together with a specific recommendation as to the manner in which the bill, resolution, or other matter referred to the committee should be disposed of by the House. A report recommending a bill or resolution for passage shall clearly state the purpose of the bill. A report on a bill or resolution shall show clearly any proposed amendments and the Clerk shall place such a bill or resolution on the appropriate calendar.

(b) A report shall be considered adopted by a committee when the Chairperson and a majority of the members of the committee have signed the report concurring therein. A member or members not concurring in the report of the majority may so indicate by submitting a minority report which shall be attached to the committee report or by signing with "I do not concur".

(c) When a committee recommends that a bill or resolution be formally filed (indefinitely postponed), the recommendation is reported to the House floor as a committee report to be confirmed by majority vote. Adoption of the committee report by the members has the effect of officially filing the bill.

(d) When, by majority vote, the House adopts a committee report recommending favorable action on a bill or resolution, the bill or resolution as reported by the committee shall be placed on the appropriate calendar for House floor action.

(e) All documents, testimonies, or other evidence submitted to any standing or special committee or subcommittee in connection with any matter referred to the committee or subcommittee shall be the property of the House. The Chair of any committee or

subcommittee shall deliver all such documents, testimonies, or other evidence to the House Clerk upon expiration of the term of the House.

RULE IX. BILLS, RESOLUTIONS AND AMENDMENTS

Section 9. First Reading of Bills and Resolutions

(a) When a bill or resolution is read in the House the first time, the Clerk shall report the bill by title, unless a majority orders it read in full, or by such subdivisions as the motion to read may indicate. The House shall then proceed to debate the measure, and no other amendment shall be in order until all committee amendments shown in the Committee Report are disposed of, except that such committee amendments shall themselves be subject to amendment. At the conclusion of a debate the House shall vote on passing the measure on First Reading after affording an opportunity for one motion to recommit with or without instructions. If the Measure passes with amendments, the Clerk shall engross such amendments and cause the measure, or any page thereof, to be reprinted as provided in Sections 4 and 6 of this Rule.

(b) If a bill passes First Reading, the Clerk shall place it on the Bill Calendar for Second Reading the next legislative day.

(c) First Reading of a resolution shall be the only and final reading, and upon its passage, the Clerk shall dispose of it pursuant to Section 14 of this Rule.

Section 10. Second Reading of Bills

(a) When a bill is read in the House a second time, it shall be considered in the same manner as for First Reading, except that further amendments shall be in order without regard to whether or not they are proposed by the committee reporting the bill.

(b) Second Reading of a bill shall be the final reading, and upon its passage, which shall be by Call of the Roll, the Clerk shall dispose of it pursuant to Section 14 of this Rule.

The motion was seconded.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: A motion has been made by the Floor Leader to adopt House Bill 22-19 and has been seconded. Discussion? Recognize Representative Tina Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Colleagues, I want to thank all of you for agreeing to expedite our review and action on House Bill 22-19, which would restore the Earned Income Tax Credit for the Commonwealth's working families. For more than two-decades, CNMI law has imposed a 100% tax on the EITC, primarily because it was deemed too costly. In the IRS code the EITC –

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: We are out of order. Hold on. We're only suspending the rules. We're not debating – we're under reports. After we vote then we come back and I –

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: So noted. I withdraw. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you for that clarification, Floor Leader. Again the motion is placed on the floor for the suspension of rules and it has been seconded. Any discussion on the suspension of the rules?

There was no discussion and the motion to suspend Rule VII, Section IX and Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10 was carried by voice vote. There was no "nay vote."

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader made a motion to pass the following legislation:

H. B. NO. 22-19

A Bill for an Act to repeal Title 4 Section 1709 of the Commonwealth Code in order to provide relief for working families by making them eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit; and for other purposes.

The motion was seconded.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: A motion has been placed by the Floor Leader to adopt House Bill 22-19 and has been seconded. Discussion on the floor. Representative Tina Sablan recognize.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, as I was saying. Thank you again colleagues for agreeing to expedite our action on this bill. For over 20 years now the CNMI law has imposed a 100% tax on the Earned Income Tax Credit primarily because it was deemed too costly. However, in the IRS code the EITC is a refundable tax credit available primarily to low income working tax payers who are US citizens or lawful permanent residence. Citizens of the freely associated states who are living and working in the US are also eligible. Because we have adopted a tax code that mirrors the IRS code pursuant to the Covenant, the EITC would apply to eligible working tax payers in the Northern Marianas if not for the CNMI law that recaptures those funds with the 100% tax. This tax on the EITC on our local law is essentially a tax on the poor on low income, local working families. Thanks to the American Rescue Plan, the argument that the EITC is too costly has gone away, it's resolved. The EITC in the Marianas will be fully and permanently covered by federal funds, but to ensure that the benefits of the EITC actually get to the pockets of our people who really need this help, we have to do our part and repeal the CNMI law that slaps a 100% tax on the EITC. Colleagues, the benefits of the EITC are well documented in the literature and summarized in the findings of the bill. The EITC fights poverty, it encourages work, it boosts the earnings of low income and moderate income households. Children in low income families that avail of the EITC fair so much better in terms of health and educational outcomes and the EITC stimulates the economy. The Department of Finance estimates a total value of the EITC this year to be approximately \$25 Million that's money directly in the hands of people who are likely to spend it immediately to meet their basic needs and improve their lives. That's money that will be such a tremendous help to families who have been hit hardest by recent typhoon disasters and this global pandemic. The money is there. Our people need it. Now it's up to us to repeal this tax, restore the EITC and get these funds out to our people as soon and as quickly as possible. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Tina Sablan. I recognize Representative Leepan.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a floor amendment. Maybe I can illustrate why this floor amendment is needed. We want to put a sunset provision. Knowing the Washington itself, the next cycle of lawmakers might remove this provision, this EITC for the territories. So, we want to make sure if it does or it does not – in the event it does it would be the responsibility of the CNMI government if this continues on to find additional money to continue with this EITC program. So with that, this is to offer an amendment to House Bill 22-19.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero offered the following amendment:

Floor Amendment

To: House Bill No. 22-19

Offered by: Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero

AMENDMENTS:

Add Section. Section 4. Sunset Provision.

(c) The tax credit provision pursuant to US Public Law 117-2, Section 7530 (4)(C)(b)(1)(A)(B)(i)(ii) shall cease at such time said subsection shall terminate.

Consistent with the intent of the forgoing amendment(s), I hereby also move to allow the Legal Counsel together with the House Clerk to make further non-substantive technical amendments that are strictly necessary to effectuate the intent of this floor amendment prior to transmittal.

Date: March 19, 2021 Offered by: /s/ Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:
/s/ Legal Counsel Joseph Tajeron

The motion was seconded.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: A motion has been offered by Representative Joseph Leepan and has been seconded. Discussion on the floor? Recognize Representative Blanco.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: I just wanted to speak in support of this amendment, I think it's very important and I understand the purpose of the amendment is to safeguard – let's just say should a Republican party take over the House and the Senate and they decide to end EITC and we're not here anymore, then we end up funding the EITC. So, I think it's a good safeguard should a different party decide to end this program then it automatically also ends in the CNMI. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Rep. Blanco. I apologize. Rep. Demapan.

Representative Angel A. Demapan: Clarification, Mr. Speaker. I was not going to join this discussion just the discussion on the main motion.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Rep. Demapan. Rep. Tina Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Yes, thank you Mr. Speaker. I do not support this amendment and the reason why is one, the EITC enjoys very broad bipartisan support nationwide. A review of the literature shows how popular this one policy tool is for both Republicans and Democrats. Ronald Reagan was one of the biggest champions of the EITC and so are plenty of Democrats after him – before and after him. And even right here in the CNMI.

Governor Torres was an advocate for the EITC, so was Representative Demapan in 902 discussions and so is Kilili Sablan our member of congress. To insert a sunset provision or any kind of provision that presumes, speculates the very unlikely near and possible possibility of this being rolled back by Congress it is insulting and I think to – Senator Edith put perfectly in her comments during our public comments section. This 100% tax on the EITC it's a tax of the working poor of the Commonwealth and it basically amounts to this government's stealing what is actually rightfully owed to the people. We don't need sunset provisions. We don't need any other clauses that say that this is the right thing to do. The right thing to do is to repeal a tax on the poor, low-income hard-working families of our commonwealth. That's what this bill proposes to do and it really is as simple as that. Our repeal is clean. There would be gray areas in our law that we don't need to be there. Gray areas in our law if we don't repeal this today and the money is there. I would also not by the way as contentious as polarized as the dynamics are in US Congress the EITC was not controversial. Putting in 100% full permanent funding for the territories for the EITC was not an issue. There are other parts of that bill that were. So, let's just repeal this part of our law that has been such an injustice that's really what it comes down to. Let's keep it clean. Get this EITC benefit out to our people as soon as possible. It's really as simple as that. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Rep. Sablan. Representative Leepan.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do agree with colleague Sablan here. Again, there's no stopping about giving this EITC out to our people. This sunset provision is only to safeguard. So, in the event – let's just hypothetically take this scenario – what if there are changes of the guard in Washington and they remove this provision? Is the CNMI ready to assume responsibility? Where are they going to get the funding once everything dries out? We can't even bring the tourist our only industry back to the CNMI. How are we going to provide this money? Yes, it's good right now I agree, but this is just a safeguard. It does not hurt the bill itself. We're just inserting a sunset provision clause to safeguard the integrity of the bill. What's wrong with that? We're not telling Washington don't give us, continue giving us, but in the event you say, "no more it has to end" we need to protect the cougher too if there's no money what are you going to do? I, too agree that we should give the poor that's the proper way. I fully support the intent of EITC, but this sunset provision must be inserted to protect the CNMI government as well because if there's no more money, how can the government continue the program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Leepan. Further discussion? Representative Blanco.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is my second round. Just a quick question with the Counsel. Without this bill, without it at all, would we still be funded with the recovery funds 100% and permanent absent this bill?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Counsel.

Legal Counsel Joseph Taijeron: The recovery funds as we stated earlier, \$515 Million Dollars have certain perimeters for their spending. This bill, I think it's apples and oranges – separate issue. Absent this bill, the CNMI government would still be able to impose a dollar-for-dollar tax upon the benefit. So, I think it's an apples and oranges kind of question.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Continue Rep. Blanco.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: I just want to state that there was EITC I understand before and it was eliminated because we could not fund it back in the 80's and that's why I think this safeguard provision is important to be included and furthermore this safeguard also prevents us from mortgaging our children's future if like Rep. Leepan said if there's a change in congress and they decide that there's not enough money to spread around in the states and territories and change the language then we end up holding the bag to pay for the tax credits. I think this provision is important to include in it and I would fully support the bill but with this provision in there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Rep. Blanco. Further discussion? Ready? Okay.

There was no further discussion and the motion to adopt the floor amendment offered by Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero was carried by voice and there was a division on the floor. The Chair recognized the Clerk for a roll call vote.

The Clerk called the roll on motion to adopt the floor amendment offered by Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	yes
Representative Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao	yes
Representative Celina R. Babauta	no
Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta	no
Representative Ivan A. Blanco	yes
Representative Joel C. Camacho	yes
Representative Vicente C. Camacho	no
Representative Angel A. Demapan	yes
Representative Joseph A. Flores	yes
Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero	yes
Representative Richard T. Lizama	no
Representative Donald M. Manglona	no
Representative Edwin K. Propst	no
Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan	no
Representative John Paul P. Sablan	yes
Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas	yes
Representative Leila Haveia F. C. Staffler	no
Representative Denita K. Yangetmai	no
Representative Ralph N. Yumul	yes
Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez	no (<i>voted twice to break the tie</i>)

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, 10 members voted "yes" and 10 members voted "no".

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Quick recess.

The House recessed at 7:00 p.m.

RECESS

The House reconvened at 7:23 p.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Alright members we'll rise back to session and before we went on recess the Clerk had the floor. Clerk can you repeat the numbers please.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The vote is 10 members voted "yes" and 10 members voted "no".

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you and before I declare the vote, I would like to exercise my authority under Rule XI, Section 10 and the vote is no. Recognize the Clerk.

RULE XI. VOTING

Section 10. Tie Vote.

When the vote for and the vote against a proposition are equal, the Speaker may cast a second vote to break the tie. This provision shall not apply to the election of legislative officers nor to the matters of the organizational session as set forth in Title 1, section 1104e of the Commonwealth Code (1 CMC §1104).

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, the vote now is 10 members voting "yes" and 11 members voting "no."

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you. With 11 members voting "no" and 10 members voting "yes" the amendment hereby is not approved. Further discussion? Recognize Representative Angel Demapan.

Representative Angel A. Demapan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start off by stating for the record that my vote on this EITC restoration was predetermined and it will be a yes after we clarify certain things. One of the things I want to clarify is the statement reiterated by the Director of Revenue and Tax in her public comment today. So, I'd like to direct our attention to Department and Agency 22-05 from the Secretary of Finance and paragraph three he talks about section 1709 as encompassing other excess tax credit other than the EITC. For example, he lists some examples the residential energy efficiency tax, the research and development tax credit, business energy tax, investment tax credit, electric vehicle tax credit and so in that breath the Department of Finance through the infinite wisdom of the Assistant AG assigned to them recommended that section 1709 not be repealed in its entirety, however; in support of restoring the Earned Income Tax Credit that we use alternative language that would preserve the restoration of the EITC and in this case preserve the legislative intent of the bill's author. So, I want to direct the attention of Counsel to paragraph three of this communication. Maybe you can give us a legal opinion or Counsel on advice here on the obligation because according to this comment it says, "if we repeal section 1709 and its entirety then we obligate the Commonwealth government to pay all the other excess credits outside of the EITC. I am supporting the restoration of the EITC, I'm supporting this bill because after many years of request for a federal cover over and our colleague Tina Sablan mentioned earlier that I supported this in the 902 that is true because in the 902 we asked for a federal cover over. Since the implementation of EITC in the CNMI was – then it was repealed when the Commonwealth government could no longer afford it and for many years we asked for the very first time for federal cover over to ensure that we return this benefit to working families who really deserve it and finally low and behold the United States has given us a federal cover over after asking for it and so now I'm ready to support this bill to restore EITC, however, I would like to make sure that we only cover EITC because we have federal cover over funds for it. We do not have cover over funds for all the other excess credits that the Department of Finance is referencing in this communication. So in

as much as I would like to cast a vote to restore EITC right away I would like to cast a vote to restore EITC only and not the unforeseen obligations of other excess credits.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Counsel.

Legal Counsel Joseph Taijeron: I'd like a short recess just so I can verify what it says in the memo and then compare that to the actual statute.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Short recess.

The House recessed at 7:28 p.m.

RECESS

The House reconvened at 7:31 p.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: We're back to session and before we went on recess Rep. Angel had the floor and had a question for the Counsel. I recognize the Counsel.

Legal Counsel Joseph Taijeron: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking at the letter dated February 18, 2021 which was brought to my attention just a few minutes ago and I have to concur with the provision of the letter from the Secretary of Finance that a full repeal of section 1709, tile 4 would result in just by the plain language. The elimination of 1709 and that 1709 basically the tax on overpayments. The repeal in the entirety of 1709 will result in it being no longer a force and effect and that would mean the EITC will no longer be an issue but at the same time there are other overpayments such as the residential energy efficiency tax credit, the research and development credit tax cred and the list goes on and that wasn't the intent of the legislation on the table. So for that reason I would concur with Representative Demapan that there may be a more precise language that would effectuate the intent of the legislation on the table without having any unintentional effects on the other overpayment taxes. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Legal Counsel. Rep. Demapan.

Representative Angel A. Demapan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the advice of our Counsel, I would like to offer a floor amendment to address this discrepancy and to ensure that as recommended by the Department of Finance they actually have a draft legislation offered also, but was not incorporated so I am going to use that language in the floor amendment being distributed by the Sergeant-at-Arms to ensure that we finally restore EITC in the Marianas and not bind the government to the other excise credit obligations pursuant to this act. So while the Sergeant-at-Arms is distributing the floor amendment, I would like to read it for the record.

Representative Angel A. Demapan offered the following floor amendment:

Floor Amendment

To: House Bill No. 22-19

Offered by: Representative Angel Demapan

AMENDMENTS:

Amend Section 3 to strike and read as follows:

Section 3. Amendment. Title 4 of the Commonwealth Code, Division 1 Revenue and Taxation, Section 1709, titled, “Tax on Overpayments” is hereby amended as follows (insert):

“(a) There is imposed on every person who is subject to the NMTIT and who has an overpayment arising from any excessive credit, other than a credit relating to taxes withheld at the source, such as wages, and the credit relating to estimated taxes paid in excess of the actual tax liability of the taxpayer, a separate, additional tax for such taxable year equal to the amount of such overpayment.

(b) The tax imposed under subsection (a) shall not apply to any overpayment arising from a tax credit that is accounted for by an authorized funding source.

Consistent with the intent of the forgoing amendment(s), I hereby also move to allow the Legal Counsel together with the House Clerk to make further non-substantive technical amendments that are strictly necessary to effectuate the intent of this floor amendment prior to transmittal.

Date: March 19, 2021

Offered by: /s/Representative Angel A. Demapan

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:

/s/ Legal Counsel Joseph Tajeron

The motion was seconded.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Floor amendment has been offered by Representative Demapan and has been seconded. Discussion on the floor amendment? Recognize Representative Tina Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not support the proposed amendment and the reason I do not support the proposed amendment I’d like to explain. So, I did meet as the Secretary of Finance’s letter explains. We did have a meeting about this proposal to repeal the 100% tax on the earned income tax credit and there was this suggestion that perhaps we could adopt language to this affect and then I sent this proposal to our congressional office when the American Rescue Plan Act was still being debated, was still going through this reconciliation process and the bill – with this language was routed off to other members on the Ways and Means Committee, other agencies and the response that we got back was that this – it’s just not enough. This is not a repeal on the 100% tax. It’s still amounts legally speaking it’s still amounts to a circumvention on our obligations under the covenant to adopt a mirrored tax code and ya it still creates a gray area in terms of is our tax code consistent with the covenant and with our obligations to follow this mirror tax code. If we don’t – I think it really is important to come back to the purpose of these tax credits in the code. The purpose is really to help the people who need them, the people who have children and are entitled to a tax credit. There’s a gray area in our law because of this language and that gray area doesn’t go away if we adopt the proposed amendment that Rep. Demapan has put forward. There are gray areas as to other credits which the Secretary of Finance enumerates, but the biggest issue by far – because

how many people are actually filing for credits on an electric vehicle here, let's be honest – the biggest issue by far was the obligation of the commonwealth to payout the earned income tax credit. We could argue as has been argued in Guam where they try to do something similar to avoid payout this credit was always an obligation of this government. Now that that issue has gone away, now that we have full permanent federal funding. There's concern that the monies might go away, might be repealed, there might be some other tax credits that the Commonwealth will never be able to afford that is purely speculative and to include this language again it's not enough and what it does is it retains this gray area in our code. Going back to what are these credits for? The EITC is for working people, the child tax credit is also – you know because the language that's been in our law this whole time it could also be something that could have been challenged. So I would strongly urge colleague this language was reviewed by the congressional office was before the language that Rep. Demapan is proposing, the language that Finance requested. It was reviewed by the congressional office before this EITC permanent funding was made into the law. Again, this isn't going to cut it. It's not going to do it. There will still be problems in our law that we may have to answer for it in the future. So, as a policy call it's cleaner to just do this repeal. I would like to ask Rep. Demapan respectfully to consider withdrawing this amendment and let's move to the main motion. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Rep. Sablan. Recognize Rep. John Paul Sablan.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to state for the record that I'm pretty determined to support this EITC bill with the notion that we are supposed to – we ask that we support this floor amendment. This is a recommendation coming from our Secretary of Finance. This is – we go back again – this is why it's important that we've been arguing that we should place such legislation into the committee so that they can thoroughly review. Now that comments were made from our respective agencies, we're practically saying that they're wrong? If this floor amendment is not going to be supported then I'm not going to support this bill.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative John Paul Sablan. Any further discussion? Rep. Demapan were you going to raise your hand?

Representative Angel A. Demapan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the feedbacks we've received from our colleagues. For the record I'm relying on an assistant AG's feedback in the Commonwealth, I'm relying on our House Legal Counsel from the Commonwealth. I have not heard any or seen any legal feedback from the congressional office. I cannot vote or make a decision to offer amendments on matters that are not privy to leaders here in the commonwealth. I think our role as representatives here in the commonwealth is first and foremost, make sure that we meet the obligations of the commonwealth and the feedback that we received not just from this communication with the Secretary, but in consultation with the assistant AG assigned to the Department of Finance and in consultation today with our own Legal Counsel. My floor amendment stands offered and ready for action. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Rep. Demapan. Recognize Representative Sheila Babauta.

Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you for the clarification Rep. Angel Demapan and Legal Counsel. Although I appreciate this discussion and

you bringing this to our attention, I do not support this floor amendment because here in the Commonwealth we need to act in good faith as legislators to our federal counterparts. They have permanently funded the EITC, they have reviewed the language and they have stated it's not enough. They have made decisions that would benefit many of us in the Commonwealth. Over 60% of our community is in poverty. So if we want to speculate the funding possibly being suspended, possibly taken away in the future, we can also speculate positively. How about in the future if our poverty rate was not at 60%, how about if we can support the EITC, how about if the families who really needed this funding receive it? How about a legislature who can figure it out when that time comes? Why don't we have faith in our voters? Why don't we have faith in our leaders that when the time comes they will figure it out. Because right now the EITC is mandated by the covenant because we have a mirror tax code. So according to the research from the congressional office that was provided for by the congressional office to us legislators and we all got a copy is that we have two options. If we can't afford it, we find a way to afford it and we introduce new taxes. If we can't do that then we must delink from the code and come up of our own, but those are the two options that they give us and Guam tried to do the same thing and in the language it says that we must follow that of Guam. So Guam is specifically in the language. So, this is something that we're trying to run around and deny responsibility to pay out these tax credits. When it is for the people who need it when it is the responsibility of our leaders to figure out a way to afford it whether that be you know introducing new taxes that make sense that are affordable or constricting our government or introducing new legislation that is actually income generating. So I have faith in our community, I have faith in our voters, I have faith in our future leaders, I prefer to speculate positively and that is the reason I do not support this floor amendment. I want us here in the commonwealth to show the federal government that we are serious about the EITC, we are serious about the tax credits, we're serious about our government and that we know how to govern ourselves. With that Mr. Speaker, I do not support this floor amendment and I urge my colleagues not to support it as well. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Rep. Sheila Babauta. Any further discussion? Representative Leepan.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: Just clarification because I'm hearing from Rep. Sheila Babauta that report was given to members. I did not get that report. I don't know how she can allude that we got that report. Sorry Mr. Speaker.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Privilege.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: I recognize your privilege Rep. Tina Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you. To clarify this was the legal analysis that was provided by email and copies to the members. It was an analysis by the congressional research service of whether the part of our tax law that imposes this 100% tax on the EITC and any excess tax credit is a violation of the covenant. So if you didn't get it Rep. Leepan I'd be happy to share with you. The argument was pretty clear as Rep. Sheila Babauta said that this does violate the covenant and it does raise questions about our willingness to show good faith and to comply with our obligations to implement a mirror tax code as required in our covenant. If it were to be challenged as it was in Guam, this law could easily be struck down. That is the gray area that I was referring to that is spelled out in greater detail in the CRS analysis. So to go to what Rep. Demapan was saying about we haven't seen any legal analysis from outside the

CNMI, actually we have and it was a very thorough legal analysis why this part of our law – it supports the argument that this part of our law needs to be cleanly repealed and then we can move forward.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Any further discussion?

Several members voiced “ready.”

There was no further discussion and the motion to adopt the floor amendment offered by Representative Angel A. Demapan was carried by voice and there was a division on the floor. The Chair recognized the Clerk for a roll call vote.

The Clerk called the roll on motion to adopt the floor amendment offered by Representative Angel A. Demapan with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	yes
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao	yes
Representative Celina R. Babauta	no
Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta	no
Representative Ivan A. Blanco	yes
Representative Joel C. Camacho	yes
Representative Vicente C. Camacho	no
Representative Angel A. Demapan	yes
Representative Joseph A. Flores	yes
Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero	yes
Representative Richard T. Lizama	no
Representative Donald M. Manglona	no
Representative Edwin K. Propst	no
Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan	no
Representative John Paul P. Sablan	yes
Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas	yes
Representative Leila Haveia F. C. Staffler	no
Representative Denita K. Yangetmai	no
Representative Ralph N. Yumul	yes
Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez	yes

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, 11 members voted “yes” and 9 members voted “no”.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: With 11 members voting “yes” and 9 members voting “no” the amendment hereby passes. Further discussion? Alright on the main motion, Clerk please call the roll.

The Clerk called the roll on motion for the passage of House Bill 22-19, House Draft 1 on First and Final Reading with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	yes
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao	yes
Representative Celina R. Babauta	yes
Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta	yes
Representative Ivan A. Blanco	yes
Representative Joel C. Camacho	yes
Representative Vicente C. Camacho	yes
Representative Angel A. Demapan	yes
Representative Joseph A. Flores	yes

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero	yes
Representative Richard T. Lizama	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	yes
Representative Edwin K. Propst	yes
Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan	yes

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Can we have a short recess?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Short recess.

The House recessed at 7:50 p.m.

RECESS

The House reconvened at 7:56 p.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Alright, members we rise back to session and I recognize the Clerk.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan	yes
Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas	yes
Representative Leila Haveia F. C. Staffler	yes
Representative Denita K. Yangetmai	yes
Representative Ralph N. Yumul	yes
Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez	yes

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, all 20 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: With 20 members voting “yes,” House Bill 22-19, House Draft 1 hereby passes the House. Alright members as we discussed earlier, we will recess and continue the session at 10:30 on Tuesday. We are recessed.

The House stood recess at 7:57 p.m. and will reconvene on Tuesday, March 23, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

The House of Representatives of the Twenty-Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature reconvened its Fourth Day, First Regular Session on Tuesday, March 23, 2021, at 10:41 a.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: We now rise back to our session. Before we went to recess, I know we were in Bill Calendar, but I'd like to ask the indulgence of the members and we move back up to the resolution calendar and dispose of the resolution. So with that.

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: Speaker, if I may.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Yes, recognize Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: Before you recognize me. Just to remind the members if there's any bills, unnumbered if they have they want to introduce it today.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you for that Floor Leader. Yes in our last session the pertinent rules were suspended to introduce communications and unnumbered bills. So, just to put that out there. Floor Leader please.

RESOLUTION CALENDAR

The Floor Leader made a motion to withdraw the following resolution:

H. RES. NO. 22-3

A House Resolution to amend the House of Representatives Rules of Procedure that was adopted on January 11, 2021; and for other purposes.

The motion was seconded.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: Privilege Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Representative Leepan.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: What's the rational in putting it back to the ad hoc committee? Why? Can we just get a complete analogy as to why?

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: Thank you, Representative Lee. Because we operated two sessions with the interim rules and I believe that since we're operating the permanent rules has expired in the rule – the interim rule that expired into rule and we used it twice on two sessions it is to the best interest I believe to the members that I withdraw the resolution.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: So that means we're stuck with the interim rule?

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: Yes.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you. So the motion has been placed on the floor and it has been seconded. Any further discussion?

Several members voiced “ready.”

There was no further discussion and the motion to withdraw House Resolution 22-3 was carried by a majority “aye” vote. There was no “nay” vote.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you members. We move to the next resolution. I recognize the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader made a motion to adopt the following resolution:

H. RES. NO. 22-5

To extend our sincere condolences and sympathies to the family of the late Bob Reynolds and to honor his memory whose worthy endeavors contributed to the quality of life in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The motion was seconded.

There was no discussion and the motion to withdraw House Resolution 22-5 was carried by a majority “aye” vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair directed the members to item XVI, Bill Calendar and recognized the Floor Leader.

BILL CALENDAR

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: Before I offer a motion to pass House Bill 22-46, I offer a motion to suspend Rule VII, Section 9 committee reports and other documents and Rule IX, Section 9 and 10 on First and Final Reading. So move.

RULE VII. COMMITTEES GENERALLY

Section 9. Committee Reports; Other documents

(a) Standing or Special Committees shall submit a written report to the Speaker within 60 days from the date the matter was referred to the committee, unless a shorter or longer time is ordered by the Speaker pursuant to a decision by the House Leadership. Subcommittees shall submit reports on matters referred to them as prescribed by the Standing Committee Chair. Standing, special and conference committees shall submit their reports in writing and provide an electronic copy to the Clerk who shall number the reports consecutively in the order received, cause such reports to be reviewed for legal sufficiency, reproduced, and furnished each member of the House at least twenty-four hours prior to the session at which it is to be considered. A committee report shall state findings of facts and conclusions based thereon together with a specific recommendation as to the manner in which the bill, resolution, or other matter referred to the committee should be disposed of by the House. A report recommending a bill or resolution for passage shall clearly state the purpose of the bill. A report on a bill or resolution shall show clearly any proposed amendments and the Clerk shall place such a bill or resolution on the appropriate calendar.

(b) A report shall be considered adopted by a committee when the Chairperson and a majority of the members of the committee have signed the report concurring therein. A member or members not concurring in the report of the majority may so indicate by submitting a minority report which shall be attached to the committee report or by signing with "I do not concur".

(c) When a committee recommends that a bill or resolution be formally filed (indefinitely postponed), the recommendation is reported to the House floor as a committee report to be confirmed by majority vote. Adoption of the committee report by the members has the effect of officially filing the bill.

(d) When, by majority vote, the House adopts a committee report recommending favorable action on a bill or resolution, the bill or resolution as reported by the committee shall be placed on the appropriate calendar for House floor action.

(e) All documents, testimonies, or other evidence submitted to any standing or special committee or subcommittee in connection with any matter referred to the committee or subcommittee shall be the property of the House. The Chair of any committee or subcommittee shall deliver all such documents, testimonies, or other evidence to the House Clerk upon expiration of the term of the House.

RULE IX. BILLS, RESOLUTIONS AND AMENDMENTS

Section 9. First Reading of Bills and Resolutions

(a) When a bill or resolution is read in the House the first time, the Clerk shall report the bill by title, unless a majority orders it read in full, or by such subdivisions as the motion to read may indicate. The House shall then proceed to debate the measure, and no other amendment shall be in order until all committee amendments shown in the Committee Report are disposed of, except that such committee amendments shall themselves be subject to amendment. At the conclusion of a debate the House shall vote on passing the measure on First Reading after affording an opportunity for one motion to recommit with or without instructions. If the Measure passes with amendments, the Clerk shall engross such amendments and cause the measure, or any page thereof, to be reprinted as provided in Sections 4 and 6 of this Rule.

(b) If a bill passes First Reading, the Clerk shall place it on the Bill Calendar for Second Reading the next legislative day.

(c) First Reading of a resolution shall be the only and final reading, and upon its passage, the Clerk shall dispose of it pursuant to Section 14 of this Rule.

Section 10. Second Reading of Bills

(a) When a bill is read in the House a second time, it shall be considered in the same manner as for First Reading, except that further amendments shall be in order without regard to whether or not they are proposed by the committee reporting the bill.

(b) Second Reading of a bill shall be the final reading, and upon its passage, which shall be by Call of the Roll, the Clerk shall dispose of it pursuant to Section 14 of this Rule.

The motion was seconded.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Discussion? Recognize the Vice Speaker.

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you, Floor Leader for suspending pertinent rules for this specific legislation. Members, with your indulgence, Sarge is passing around the substitute version of 22-46. So the intent of the legislation is to revert back the 10% management revolving funds.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Point of order.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: I think the motion is to suspend the rules for before you make the main motion to pass House Bill 22-46. I believe the Vice is already –

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: My apologies Mr. Speaker, I thought we voted on that already. I yield to the members.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: We need to dispose suspension before we go to the main motion.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you for that Representative John Paul Sablan, duly noted. The motion has been made and seconded. Discussion?

Several members voiced “ready.”

There was no discussion and the motion to suspend Rule VII, Section IX and Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay vote.”

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader made a motion to pass the following legislation:

H. B. NO. 22-46

A Bill for an Act to repeal and re-enact 4 CMC 1402 (g) to allocate 10 percent of the excise tax to the Solid Waste Management Revolving Fund.

The motion was seconded.

Under discussion; the Chair recognized Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao.

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I apologize to the members for moving ahead without adopting the vote on the suspension of rules, but with that being said the said the Sarge has passing around a substitute version for 22-46. The intent of this legislation is to revert back to 10% it had been created under 13-42 under the ad valorem to address the EPA concerns that when the Puerto Rico dump was being closed out and the landfill was being opened up that there’s a secured fund to address the issues of the landfill. During it’s duration and should it close down 30 years thereafter and an opening of another landfill should we need to in our time. So the substitute version that’s before you right now reverts the 10% back to the revolving fund and it also addresses that the 3% will be taken from the 90% of the ad valorem that would be going to the NGO more specifically to the cancer fund. I know that the hospital came up and the cancer association also came up to request that their 3% is not touched and this substitute version does address that concern and we’ll make sure that those funds will go to the cancer fund and to the hospital for their needs. So with that being said, I move to present a substitute version to 22-46 and all the members have them in their hands. Should there be any questions by the members I can try my best to answer your concerns on the substitute version. So move, Mr. Speaker.

Twenty-Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature

**In the House of Representatives
March 16, 2021**

First Regular Session, 2021

H. B. 22-46, HS1

A BILL FOR AN ACT

To amend 4 CMC 1402 (g)(1) to allocate 10 percent of the excise tax to the Solid Waste Management Revolving Fund.

Be It Enacted By The 22nd Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature:

Section 1. Findings. The Legislature finds that 10 percent of the total excise tax collected under 4 CMC 1402 should be allocated to the Solid Waste Revolving Account.

Section 2. Title 4 of the CNMI Code section 1402 (g) (1) is amended to read as follows: “(1) Seven ~~Ten~~ percent of excise taxes collected under this section Title 4 section 1402 shall be reserved for the Solid Waste Management Program and deposited into the Solid Waste Management Revolving Fund to be expended by the Secretary of the Department of Public Works.”

(2) [unchanged]

(3) [unchanged]

Section 3. Severability. If any provisions of this Act or the application of any such provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.

Section 4. Savings Clause. This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the statutes. Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

Section 5. Effective Date. This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the Governor, or its becoming law without such approval.

Prefiled: 3/12/2021

Date: 3/12/2021 Introduced by:

- /s/ Rep. Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao
- /s/ Rep. Roy C.A. Ada
- /s/ Rep. Celina R. Babauta
- /s/ Rep. Ivan A. Blanco
- /s/ Rep. Angel A. Demapan
- /s/ Rep. Joseph A. Flores
- /s/ Rep. Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero
- /s/ Rep. Richard T. Lizama
- /s/ Rep. John Paul P. Sablan
- /s/ Rep. Patrick H. San Nicolas
- /s/ Rep. Edmund S. Villagomez
- /s/ Rep. Denita Kaipat Yangetmai
- /s/ Rep. Ralph N. Yumul

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:

/s/ Joseph L.G. Tajeron, Jr.
House Legal Counsel

The motion was seconded.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: A House Substitute has been offered by the Vice Speaker and has been seconded. Discussion on the floor? Recognize Representative Celina Babauta.

Representative Celina R. Babauta: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In our last session, I believe with the original draft bill, we made corrections to line 11 instead of “3CMC” it should read “4CMC” however on the substitute bill it says section 2 remains unchanged.

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Yes, the reason for line 10 and 11 on the substitute version is that it reflects the intent of 18-64 so the additional funds that were being distributed were not changed. That was the concern brought up by the cancer association and CHCC. So, those sections will remain there provided that the 10% is giving back to the solid waste management revolving fund and tat CHCC and cancer association will maintain the 3% that will be appropriated from the budget.

Representative Celina R. Babauta: I understand that and I have not objections to that however on the original draft it said the original language was “3CMC” and we made changes to reflect “4CMC”

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Yes.

Representative Celina R. Babauta: And the substitute bill it says unchanged so are we back to “3CMC” or “4CMC”?

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: It will remain at “4CMC” that’s why the substitute version kind of throws out the original version. So, we’re down to the substitute version that will address the concerns that were brought up during public comments on our session on Friday. Thank you, Speaker and thank you Chair.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Vice Speaker. Thank you, Representative Celina Babauta. Any further discussions? Ready.

There was further discussion and the motion to adopt the floor amendment offered by Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao was carried by a majority “aye” vote. There was no “nay” vote.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: We’re back to the main motion. Any discussion on the floor? With no discussion, I now recognize the Clerk.

The Clerk called the roll on motion for the passage of House Bill 22-46, House Substitute 1 on First and Final Reading with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	yes
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao	yes

Representative Celina R. Babauta	yes
Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta	yes
Representative Ivan A. Blanco	yes
Representative Joel C. Camacho	yes
Representative Vicente C. Camacho	yes
Representative Angel A. Demapan	yes
Representative Joseph A. Flores	yes
Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero	yes
Representative Richard T. Lizama	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	yes
Representative Edwin K. Propst	yes
Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan	absent (<i>during voting</i>)
Representative John Paul P. Sablan	yes
Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas	yes
Representative Leila Haveia F. C. Staffler	yes
Representative Denita K. Yangetmai	yes
Representative Ralph N. Yumul	yes
Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez	yes

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, all 19 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: With 19 members voting “yes,” House Bill 22-46, House Substitute 1 is hereby passed. Thank you, members. We will now move on to the next item on our agenda Miscellaneous Business. Anyone on the floor?

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Mr. Speaker, if I may. I believe we still have one item on the bill calendar and that is House Bill 22-21. Is there any reason why we’re not acting on that on today’s session?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you for that Representative Sablan. At the request of the Chairwoman, she would like to have a little more time. She is seeking more comments in terms of the legislation.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: If I may Mr. Speaker. It’s really troubling on our last session we acted on legislations absent any communication and now we’re going to use that notion because there’s no communications on this bill. There are several communications even from the last legislature. There are comments from CDA with regards to this legislation. Perhaps we can deliberate on that and debate.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you. Can I call for a quick recess.

The House recessed at 10:53 a.m.

RECESS

The House reconvened at 12:40 p.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Member we’ll rise back to session. Just called you guys back just to let you know and the general public that we will continue this recess until 10:30 Thursday morning. Okay? Because this afternoon certain things came up and I know there’s a JGO meeting as well. So, we’ll reconvene Thursday 10:30. Okay back to recess.

The House stood recess at 12:41 p.m. and will reconvene on Thursday, March 25, 2021 at 10:30 a.m.

The House of Representatives of the Twenty-Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature reconvened its Fourth Day, First Regular Session on Thursday, March 25, 2021, at 10:47 a.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Good morning members. We now rise back to session. When we went on recess we were under the Bill Calendar, but as discussed during recess will go back up to the agenda. As you all know there were pertinent rules suspended to accept or introduce communications and unnumbered bills for this session's agenda. So with that we will go back to item IV, Introduction of Bills. I now recognize Representative Leepan Guerrero.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero officially introduced the following House Bill:

H. B. No. 22-47

Internet Gaming Act of 2021 to allow senatorial districts to establish and regulate internet gaming.

REP. JOSEPH LEEPAN T. GUERRERO of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*)
(REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON GAMING)

The Chair referred House Bill 22-47 to the Committee on Gaming and directed the members to item V, Introduction of Resolution and recognized Representative Sheila Babauta.

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

House Commemorative Resolutions

Representative Sheila Babauta officially introduced the following resolution and request that the resolution be introduced by the Committee of the Whole:

C. RES. NO. 22-4

To commemorate and celebrate the 10th birthday of the 47-foot indigenous Chamorro sakman called "Che'lu".

REP. SHEILA THERESE J. BABAUTA of Saipan, Precinct 4 (*for herself*)

The Chair referred Commemorative Resolution 22-4 to the Resolution Calendar for action.

The Chair directed the members to item VI, Messages from the Governor and recognized the Clerk.

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Clerk announced the following Messages from the Governor:

GOV. COMM. 22-23 (3/18/2021 received 3/19/21) Executive Order 2021-06 – Renewing Authority – Order authorizing the Secretary of Finance to reprogram or transfer funds from accounts of any department, agency, office, board, commission,

corporation, instrumentality or other entity of all branches of the Commonwealth Government in order to meet the threat of COVID-19.

(REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS)

GOV. COMM. 22-24 (3/19/21) From the Governor to all government heads re: Cancellation of Reduction-in-Force process, recall of furloughed employees, and return to 80-hour work week beginning March 28, 2021.

Under discussion; the Chair recognized Representative John Paul P. Sablan.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My apologies, I don't have that communication. Is there any way we can – I only have before me – it's here in the package. So clarified. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative John Paul Sablan. Any other discussion? Ready? Okay. Governor's Communication 22-23 will be referred to the Committee on Ways and Means. We now move down to item VII, Senate Communications and I recognize the Clerk.

SENATE COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk announced the following Senate Communications:

SEN. COMM.22-9: (3/19/21) Transmitting a certified copy of Senate Resolution No. 22-4, entitled, "To commemorate the distinguished and honorable life of the late Joaquin Hoashi Borja and to recognize his years of exceptional service to the people of the Second Senatorial District of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.", which was adopted by the Senate on March 12, 2021. [For info]

SEND COMM. 22-10: (3/19/21) Transmitting a certified copy of Senate Resolution No. 22-4, entitled, "To recognize and acknowledge the Honorable Julian Songao Calvo for his exemplary service and significant contributions to the people of the Commonwealth of the northern Marianas and to the business community.", which was adopted by the Senate on March 12, 2021. [For info]

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader made a motion to accept Senate Communications 22-9 and 22-10 so they may become property of the House.

There was no discussion and the motion to accept Senate Communications 22-9 and 22-10 so they may become property of the House was carried by voice vote. There was no "nay" vote.

The Chair directed the members to item VIII, House Communications and recognized the Clerk.

HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk announced the following House Communications:

HSE. COMM. 22-15: (3/16/21) From 22nd House of Representatives to US House of Representatives Chair and Ranking Member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, and to the Chair and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Health re: 22nd HOR support of H.R. 265, Insular Area Medicaid Parity Act. [*For info*]

HSE. COMM. 22-16: (3/22/21) From Representative Christina M.E. Sablan informing the Speaker that she will be out of the Commonwealth on family medical referral beginning March 22, 2021, and request to be excused from any and all scheduled meetings or sessions. [*For info*]

There was no discussion; the Chair directed the members to item X, Communications from Department & Agencies and recognized the Clerk.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM DEPARTMENTS & AGENCIES

The Clerk announced the following Communications from Department & Agencies:

Dept./Agcy. Comm. 22-13: (03/25/21) From the Commonwealth Development Authority (CDA) submitting proposed amendments to H.B. No. 22-21, entitled, A Bill for an Act to strengthen the tools and powers of the CNMI Government to promote and expand economic development and to establish the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority. [*For info*]

There was no discussion; the Chair directed the members to item XI, Miscellaneous Communications and recognized the Clerk.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk announced the following Miscellaneous Communication:

MISC. COMM. 22-18: (received 3/16/21) From the Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance (SHEFA) Board of Directors submitting 2020 SHEFA Annual Report [*For info*]

There was no discussion; the Chair directed the members to item XV, Resolution Calendar and recognized the Floor Leader.

RESOLUTION CALENDAR

The Floor Leader made a motion to suspend Rule IX, Section 11.

RULE IX. BILLS, RESOLUTIONS AND AMENDMENTS

Section 11. Public Comment on Bills and Resolutions.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in these rules, prior to enacting a bill or resolution introduced in the House, the House or committee thereof shall in the case of bills and resolutions introduced in the House and may in the case of other bills or resolutions,

afford interested persons the opportunity to submit, data, views, or arguments, orally or in writing. The House or a committee thereof may convene a committee meeting, a public hearing, or other open and public meeting to receive testimony. Agendas of such open and public forums shall comply with notice requirements of Rule III and may consider a single or multiple bills or resolutions.

(b) Prior to a vote on final passage, the Speaker and Clerk shall confirm that a bill or resolution has been offered for public comment in conformity with these rules. Except for commemorative resolutions, no bill or resolution that has not been offered for public comment shall be finally passed.

The motion was seconded.

There was no discussion and the motion to suspend Rule IX, Section 11 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader made a motion to adopt the following resolution:

C. RES. NO. 22-4

To commemorate and celebrate the 10th birthday of the 47-foot indigenous Chamorro sakman called “Che’lu”.

The motion was seconded.

Under discussion; the Chair recognized Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta.

Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that after we reconvened for recess. We didn’t get to open the floor for public comments. So I would like to read a letter from Mr. Perez and Ms. Emma Perez the founders of 500 sails. This is their public statement in support of House Commemorative Resolution to celebrate the 10th birthday of 47-foot indigenous Chamorro sakman named *Che’lu*. What is the well significance of this canoe? It is well built and it is beautiful. It’s design is based on the Anson drawing of one of the large Chamorro canoes before they disappeared for over 265 years. It is a continuation of one of the worlds most successful sailing designs, but it is much more. This canoe represents many thousands of Chamorros in many places over many years. It represents our ancestors who designed and perfected the canoe, the people who sell them and relied on them for thousands of years. It represents Chamorros of the CNMI in the US mainland who set out to build a genuine Chamorro voyaging canoe. The people who did the research, raised money, planned the construction and built the canoe. It represents the Chamorros in Guahan who welcomed *Che’lu* to her islands and to her ocean. In the 2016 festival of pacific arts and culture in Guahan, *Che’lu* welcomed canoes from across Micronesia as representatives of Chamorros in Guahan and diaspora. This canoe has a mission to restore and strengthen traditional maritime culture in the Marianas. *Che’lu* is entrusted to us to be used to carry out her mission. She has been entrusted to us because we have the resources to do this important work. We have the facilities to maintain *Che’lu*, we have programs to teach people to sail. We have the sea faring knowledge of our Carolinian voyages and navigators. Here in the CNMI we have Chamorros and Carolinians working together to ensure that our maritime traditions are not lost and that our youth will always have canoes in their lives. This is the significance of this beautiful canoe. This is the

opportunity this canoe represents recognizing the 10-year anniversary of the birth of *Che'lu* is our statement to those who have entrusted us with this canoe and with her mission that we are up to the task that we know what this canoe represents. That we are proud to take the lead on this important work, that we will do this work proudly and out of love for our islands, for our ocean, for our culture and for our people of the Marianas past, present and future where ever they live. Thank you, Mr. Speaker that was beautifully written Ms. Emma and Pete Perez, thank you for allowing me to share that with our public with the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker I'm ready to vote and thank you colleagues for supporting this commemorative resolution and for allowing us to place it on the calendar today for passage.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Sheila Babauta. Duly noted.

There was no further discussion and the motion to adopt House Commemorative Resolution 22-4 was carried by voice vote. There was no "nay" vote.

The Chair directed the members to item XVI, Bill Calendar and recognized the Floor Leader.

BILL CALENDAR

The Floor Leader made a motion to suspend Rule VII, Section 9 and Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10.

RULE VII. COMMITTEES GENERALLY

Section 9. Committee Reports; Other documents

(a) Standing or Special Committees shall submit a written report to the Speaker within 60 days from the date the matter was referred to the committee, unless a shorter or longer time is ordered by the Speaker pursuant to a decision by the House Leadership. Subcommittees shall submit reports on matters referred to them as prescribed by the Standing Committee Chair. Standing, special and conference committees shall submit their reports in writing and provide an electronic copy to the Clerk who shall number the reports consecutively in the order received, cause such reports to be reviewed for legal sufficiency, reproduced, and furnished each member of the House at least twenty-four hours prior to the session at which it is to be considered. A committee report shall state findings of facts and conclusions based thereon together with a specific recommendation as to the manner in which the bill, resolution, or other matter referred to the committee should be disposed of by the House. A report recommending a bill or resolution for passage shall clearly state the purpose of the bill. A report on a bill or resolution shall show clearly any proposed amendments and the Clerk shall place such a bill or resolution on the appropriate calendar.

(b) A report shall be considered adopted by a committee when the Chairperson and a majority of the members of the committee have signed the report concurring therein. A member or members not concurring in the report of the majority may so indicate by submitting a minority report which shall be attached to the committee report or by signing with "I do not concur".

(c) When a committee recommends that a bill or resolution be formally filed (indefinitely postponed), the recommendation is reported to the House floor as a committee report to be confirmed by majority vote. Adoption of the committee report by the members has the effect of officially filing the bill.

(d) When, by majority vote, the House adopts a committee report recommending favorable action on a bill or resolution, the bill or resolution as reported by the committee shall be placed on the appropriate calendar for House floor action.

(e) All documents, testimonies, or other evidence submitted to any standing or special committee or subcommittee in connection with any matter referred to the committee or subcommittee shall be the property of the House. The Chair of any committee or subcommittee shall deliver all such documents, testimonies, or other evidence to the House Clerk upon expiration of the term of the House.

RULE IX. BILLS, RESOLUTIONS AND AMENDMENTS

Section 9. First Reading of Bills and Resolutions

(a) When a bill or resolution is read in the House the first time, the Clerk shall report the bill by title, unless a majority orders it read in full, or by such subdivisions as the motion to read may indicate. The House shall then proceed to debate the measure, and no other amendment shall be in order until all committee amendments shown in the Committee Report are disposed of, except that such committee amendments shall themselves be subject to amendment. At the conclusion of a debate the House shall vote on passing the measure on First Reading after affording an opportunity for one motion to recommit with or without instructions. If the Measure passes with amendments, the Clerk shall engross such amendments and cause the measure, or any page thereof, to be reprinted as provided in Sections 4 and 6 of this Rule.

(b) If a bill passes First Reading, the Clerk shall place it on the Bill Calendar for Second Reading the next legislative day.

(c) First Reading of a resolution shall be the only and final reading, and upon its passage, the Clerk shall dispose of it pursuant to Section 14 of this Rule.

Section 10. Second Reading of Bills

(a) When a bill is read in the House a second time, it shall be considered in the same manner as for First Reading, except that further amendments shall be in order without regard to whether or not they are proposed by the committee reporting the bill.

(b) Second Reading of a bill shall be the final reading, and upon its passage, which shall be by Call of the Roll, the Clerk shall dispose of it pursuant to Section 14 of this Rule.

The motion was seconded.

There was no discussion and the motion to suspend Rule VII, Section 9 and Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay vote.”

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader made a motion to pass the following legislation:

H. B. NO. 22-21

A Bill for an Act to strengthen the tools and powers of the CNMI Government to promote and expand economic development and to establish the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority.

The motion was seconded.

Under discussion; the Chair recognized Representative Angel A. Demapan.

Representative Angel A. Demapan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a pretty long session and we hope to wrap it up today. I want to thank our colleagues for their input and their feedback in making sure that we have a bill that is acceptable to this body for passage and I want to state for the record that this CEDA act of 2021 is a critical update to the CNMI's ability to attract, retain and expand private sector investment in the CNMI. Under CDA's present mandate under law the purpose of CDA does not include proactive outreach and promotion of the CNMI as a location for private investment. This bill fixes this. Under current laws in the CNMI no entity of government is tasked with business retention and expansion this bill fixes this. Under the current structure of the CNMI government, no centralize agency is responsible for the economic development of our islands, this bill fixes that. The creation of CEDA establishes a central authority for the pursuit of the CNMI's economic development priorities and is a step towards modernizing the way in which our economy grows. This is just the first step towards this effort and I know we've had several discussions about the processes and the impact of this change. And we recognize, we have many areas to seek dramatic readjustment to our governmental system related to economic development, but we cannot achieve the substantial goals we seek without the coordinated and proactive efforts of establishing the Commonwealth Development Authority. And so Mr. Speaker and members, in an effort to close this chapter today, I'm going to offer a floor amendment and I'd like to recognize the inputs that have come for Chairman Ed Propst, Chairwoman Denita Yangetmai and Chairwoman Celina Babauta and we've consolidated all of our amendments and I'm going to offer that amendment at this time and I believe the Sergeant-at-Arms has distributed to the members and the clerk and the counsel.

Representative Angel A. Demapan offered the following floor amendment:

Floor Amendment

To: House Bill No. 22-21

Offered By: Representative Angel A. Demapan

AMENDMENTS:

1. Page 3, Lines 12-14 shall be amended to read as follows:

“**Section 5. Amendment.** Title 4, Division 10, Chapter 3, § 10305 (b) is amended to add a new subsections (5) and (6) and 7 to read as follows and to appropriately re-number subsequent subsections accordingly:”

2. Page 3, Line 22: After the number “10203;” delete the “closing quotation mark”.

3. Page 3, lines 19-21, after the word “CNMI” and before the words “in accordance” delete the language:

“inclusive of investor missions, entering into professional service agreements, and the establishment of off-island investment offices”

4. Page 4, Line 1: Insert a new subsection (6) to read as follows:

(6) Any use of CEDA funds for the promotional activities for CNMI investments, the expansion, and retention of an existing business, the promotion, and marketing of products of the CNMI will be reported in the annual CEDA Citizen-Centric report, as to

each activity, to include 1) Budgeted amount and annual expenditure; 2) Purpose & Action taken, and 3) Result(s) of promoting of the CNMI and any other relevant information pertaining to those activities;”

5. Page 4, Line 1: Insert a new subsection (7) to read as follows:

(7) CEDA shall act in consultation with the Department of Commerce in the performance of the duties set forth in Title 1, Division 2, Subsection 2451 et seq.

6. Page 2, Line 20-22, amend the text so that it reads: “(1) To assist in the development plan for the Commonwealth, and control and implement the part of the plan assigned to it by the Governor of the CNMI by law.”

Consistent with the intent of the forgoing amendment(s), I hereby also move to allow the Legal Counsel together with the House Clerk to make further non-substantive technical amendments that are strictly necessary to effectuate the intent of this floor amendment prior to transmittal.

Date: March 25, 2021

/s/ Rep. Angel A. Demapan

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:

/s/ Legal Counsel Joseph Tajeron

The motion was seconded.

Under discussion; the Chair recognized Representative Celina R. Babauta.

Representative Celina R. Babauta: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to commend the author Representative Angel Demapan for coming up with the bill and accepting amendments proposed and let this be a testimony to the people that we can consolidate and work together to pass some bills that make common sense and bring back common sense to the government. That is all Mr. Speaker thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Celina Babauta. Any more discussions?

Several members voiced “ready.”

There was no further discussion and the motion to adopt the floor amendment offered by Representative Angel A. Demapan was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: We now move back to the main motion. Discussion on the main motion?

Several members voiced “ready.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Clerk, please call the roll.

The Clerk called the roll on motion for the passage of House Bill 22-21, House Draft 1 on First and Final Reading with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	yes
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao	yes
Representative Celina R. Babauta	yes
Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta	yes
Representative Ivan A. Blanco	yes
Representative Joel C. Camacho	yes
Representative Vicente C. Camacho	yes
Representative Angel A. Demapan	yes
Representative Joseph A. Flores	yes
Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero	yes
Representative Richard T. Lizama	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	yes
Representative Edwin K. Propst	yes
Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan	absent (<i>during voting</i>)
Representative John Paul P. Sablan	yes
Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas	yes
Representative Leila Haveia F. C. Staffler	yes
Representative Denita K. Yangetmai	yes
Representative Ralph N. Yumul	yes
Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez	yes

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, all 19 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: With 19 members voting “yes,” House Bill 22-21, HD1 hereby passes the House. Thank you, members. We move down now to miscellaneous. Recognize Representative Blanco.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Happy belated Covenant day. If I may I would like to recognize Mr. Manny Sablan who is with us today and I understand he’s one of the signatories of the covenant agreement. So perhaps a round of applause to show our appreciation.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Blanco. Any other member? Recognize Representative Leepan Guerrero.

Representative Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I was approached by a certain individual about the status of the archive at NMC. Mr. Speaker, the importance of having that archive is to preserve historical documents so our future generation can foresee what had transpired. I had the opportunity to speak to the Acting Interim President Mr. Frank Eliptico through our discussion they have no one currently maintaining the archive other than the current staff of NMC. It is important Mr. Speaker that we should revisit that because we need to fund this and they are in need to funding to hire an archivist to make sure that documents as of today’s session should be archived for future reference of what transpired today. So Mr. Speaker, with that said I ask the President to provide the numbers to include staff in the Archives so we can fund this. In this budget call about to come this coming months, I hope that the Chairman would consider to fund this vitally important and hope that NMC hires an archivist to make sure that these documents are preserved for future references. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Lee Pan. Any other member under Miscellaneous. Recognize Representative Propst.

Representative Edwin K. Propst: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you colleagues. Before I begin discussing a couple of concerns I have, I do want to join Representative Celina Babauta in thanking the author, my dear colleague Angel Demapan for being so open and accepting our amendments. It really is a great feeling when we're all in unison and we all can agree and can find compromise and middle ground. So I fully support your bill and I want to thank you for your kindness and humility. Thank you. With that said, my colleagues and Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to speak on behalf of those firefighters right now who are currently still concerned about losing their jobs. We have heard from them and there has been some misunderstanding on Tuesday I had a phone call from a constituent who was upset with me saying, "why are you telling these firefighters to not take the vaccine" and that's part of the problem that sometimes they are misunderstanding so I calmly explain to her the situation that I was not telling them not to take the vaccine that they simply asking for the choice and the freedom to decide on whether or not to take the vaccine. So the discussion continued and she said, "if they don't get the vaccine then they're going to give us the virus when they come and pick us up in the ambulance or if they put out the fire or something" and I said, "with all due respect auntie, the truth is and what we have found out that you can still transmit the virus even with the vaccines." I encourage everyone to get the vaccine, I think everyone should get the vaccine. We want to build herd immunity, I do listen to the science. I think we all do. We all know better as leaders, however we also must think and be compassionate for those who want that freedom to have that ability to choose whether they want the vaccine or not instead of having as a mandate take it or leave it. We're talking about firefighters my dear colleagues that one of them have served for 23 years another one 20 years that's 43 years for just two gentlemen not to have mentioned all the other firefighters who have great knowledge and they are aware of science and other things. Again, they're asking that their choice be respected whether or not to take it. They will still wear the PPE's they will still put on all the gear, they will still take the risk that they took from day 1 when we were told to stay home. These are the frontlines that took those risks. I wouldn't feel comfortable if I didn't talk about this. These are firefighters, EMTs who have in some way or another have helped all of us. Whether it's saving the life or trying to save the life of a loved one or going out in search and rescue when someone is missing. They do their best, their under tremendous stress and right now some of them are under the stress that they may lose their jobs. If this vaccines were 100% if they knew for a fact that it would ensure that they cannot carry the virus or anything and if they had further status and if it were FDA approved in a meeting they told me they would take the vaccine, but until then they would like to reserve the right to make that determination on whether to take the vaccine or not. So, I'm asking to think about these firefighters who are about to lose their jobs and be unemployed and be told well it's a privilege to work as a firefighter or an EMT, I think the privilege has been ours knowing the fact that these guys risked their lives and also are one of the lowest paid firefighters and EMTs in the nation. I look to that as anyone else in the frontline who have risked their lives during this pandemic. I think we have to think about having a little bit more compassion and consideration for those who gave all they could who took those risk for us and our families. So I ask that we think about them and we be concerned enough to meet with them with their concerns on that and if I may just in closing, I did want to discuss a concern I also had with NMTI, I understand that a new Chairwoman has been appointed we congratulate Ms. Jodina Attao on her appointment as a new CEO, I hope that she does well and what I hope is that she is concerned enough to think about those employees at NMTI, these are long time employees who have been with NMTI since its

inception and who bring great institutional knowledge or a credentialed staff and instructors. Also, those who are responsible for bringing in a \$10 Million Dollar EDA grant and \$7 Million Dollars in HUD funding. What I'd hope for is that NMTI can continue to grow and be strengthened but I just I'm concerned about these employees also losing their jobs in a time like this. It's not easy to find work, but they have given all they can, several of them if not all of them that have been working with out a paycheck. I just think about them and their families and all that they have given to NMTI and I really hope they will be considered as NMTI continues. These are good people who have done so much for the institution. We hope for it to grow and under her leadership we hope that she can retain this team and grow from here. So I just want to stated that for the record and I thank you for allowing me this time Mr. Speaker and my dear colleagues thank you and happy belated covenant day. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Propst. Any member? Representative Yangetmai.

Representative Denita K. Yangetmai: I think it's only fitting that as the Chair of the Committee on Commerce, I would like to thank the other for this bill 22-21 it is great indeed thank you and thank you for allowing us to collaborate and this is very important as long as it's for the good of the people here in the Commonwealth. Thank you. And also I thank you also because I got to remove the plastic on this book. Now I know where is CDA is in this book. So this is title 4 and then we got to CDA is in 10 and then we go on to the chapter. So thank you very much. Now I know why they gave this to us along with Representative Leepan's – I spoke with some people up at DLNR, Department of Lands and Natural Resources and they said they really need to digitize their documents over there because those are land documents and they're related to those things up at the archives at NMC. So you know if we can come up some kind of funding so they can digitize those things because they're not only disappearing, they're becoming – they're fading. That's all thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Rep. Yangetmai any other member? Recognize, Representative Angel Demapan.

Representative Angel A. Demapan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Real quick, I know I recognize chairs Propst, Celina Babauta and Yangetmai earlier, but now that the vote is done, I also want to again thank you Mr. Speaker and the members our colleagues here in the House for your support and passage and just like the Chairs have said earlier that we can compromise. I also want to state for the record that yes we are the minority, but we're open to compromise also for the greater good. I think today is proof of that it's a testimony to our willingness to move forward for the betterment of the Commonwealth. So thank you everybody *si Yu'us ma'ase*.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Demapan. I recognize Representative Sheila Babauta.

Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too agree that we need to support the archives, we have many agencies like DNR and others that reach out to us about funding to ensure that they are funding that is why I'm a huge supporter of House Bill 22-33 and I still would like to encourage my colleagues to please work with our Senate counterparts reach out to them. This is one way we in the legislature can ensure funding for these departments. With that aside, I would like to bring to your attention and I know you're well aware of it, I just

wanted to discuss the Director position for the Legislative Bureau. We still have the Acting Director Mr. Perry Tenorio, he's doing a great job with the LB team, we're still grateful for you all however it does leave a vacant spot in the fiscal analyst position right now in the LB and now is the time we really need someone in that position so if you and Mr. Senate President Hofschneider please meet and make a decision and a deadline appointing a director for our Legislative Bureau, I think that would be the next best move because we have the budget season coming up we're expecting the Governor's office to submit the budget on April 1st and we have the rescue act funding. So all of these items relating to finances it would really be in the best interest of the CNMI to have someone in that position right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Sheila Babauta. Any other member? Under Miscellaneous. We'll move down to announcements. Recognize Representative Sheila Babauta.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. I just wanted to announce and remind everyone that tomorrow is the open house for 500 sails from 1:00, it's from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. I did request from my staff that we contact Top Notch to see if we can get a resolution moving forward with a plaque. So I will keep you all posted on that and I think it's something we can present to them tomorrow. Also, for the Natural Resources Committee we do have a meeting on the 31st that's next week Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. to discuss the critical habitat designation. The common period has been extended by NOAH thank goodness for another 60 days. thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Sheila Babauta. Any other member? Representative Yangetmai.

Representative Denita K. Yangetmai: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to announce to everyone that next week on the 30th we will present the resolution for women's month and we are inviting all women come. The guys they need to go BBQ. It will be at 9:30 next week over here in the chamber. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Yangetmai. Rep. Blanco you're going to lead the BBQ crew okay? Just kidding. Alright any other member? Recognize the Floor Leader for the adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I now offer a motion to adjourn subject to the call of the Chair.

The motion was seconded and carried by voice vote. There was no "nay" vote.

The House adjourned at 11:23 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Venetia S. Rosario
House Journal Clerk

APPEARANCE OF LOCAL BILLS

FIRST LEGISLATIVE DAY: 1st Legislative appearance of a local bill is on the day it is introduced.

SECOND LEGISLATIVE DAY: NONE

THIRD LEGISLATIVE DAY: NONE

Appearance of Measures introduced on the House Floor during the House Session on March 16, 2021:

H. B. NO. 22-24: To adopt the state model language for implementation of Public Law 110-289, TITLE V—S.A.F.E. MORTGAGE LICENSING ACT. Introduced by REP. JOSEPH LEEPAN T. GUERRERO of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Commerce and Tourism.

H. B. NO. 22-25: To provide relief to CNMI taxpayers affected by disasters by allowing relief from penalties and interest on unpaid taxes; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. IVAN A. BLANCO of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for himself*, Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Joel C. Camacho, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph A. Flores, Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero, John Paul P. Sablan, and Patrick H. San Nicolas) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H. B. NO. 22-26: To amend 3 CMC §2204(e) to remove the limitation of terms for members to serve on the Health Care Professions Licensing Board; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. BLAS JONATHAN “BJ” T. ATTAO of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for himself*, Representatives Celina R. Babauta, Sheila J. Babauta, Joel C. Camacho, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph A. Flores, Richard T. Lizama, Donald M. Manglona, Edwin K. Propst, Christina M.E. Sablan, John Paul P. Sablan, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Health and Welfare.

H. B. NO. 22-27: To amend 4 CMC §1407(b) to remove the 15-day grace period and to provide the Division of Customs with the authority to promulgate and establish application fees for low-risk importer applicants; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. JOHN PAUL P. SABLAN of Saipan, Precinct 2 (*for himself*) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H. B. NO. 22-28: To rename the structure for the Center for Living Independently in the CNMI to “The Lydia D. Igitol Center for Living Independently in the CNMI”; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. EDMUND S. VILLAGOMEZ of Saipan, Precinct 3, (*for himself*, Representatives Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Richard T. Lizama, and Denita Kaipat Yangetmai) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

H. B. NO. 22-29: To amend 1 CMC § 121 in order to eradicate the unconstitutional public purpose presumption for legislative expenditures. Introduced by REP. CHRISTINA M.E. SABLAN of Saipan, Precinct 2 (*for herself*, Representatives Celina R. Babauta, Richard T. Lizama, Donald M. Manglona, Edwin K. Propst, Leila H.F.C. Staffler, and Denita Kaipat Yangetmai) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

H. B. NO. 22-30: To grant the Legislature a reasonable allowance, to define a “reasonable allowance”, to set the amount of the allowance, and to certify it as a public purpose. Introduced by REP. CHRISTINA M.E. SABLAN of Saipan, Precinct 2 (*for herself*, Representatives Celina R. Babauta, Richard T. Lizama, Donald M. Manglona, Edwin K. Propst, Leila H.F.C. Staffler, and Denita Kaipat Yangetmai) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

H. B. NO. 22-31: To authorize the Department of Public Lands to issue licenses and use permits and charge fees for the use of the public lands located within 150 feet of the high water mark. Introduced by REP. JOSEPH LEEPAN T. GUERRERO of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Representatives Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Angel A. Demapan, and Joseph A. Flores) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.

H. B. NO. 22-32: To amend the Litter Control Act to the prohibit the possession of glass containers while on public beaches; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. JOSEPH LEEPAN T. GUERRERO of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Representatives Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Angel A. Demapan, and Joseph A. Flores) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.

H. B. NO. 22-33: To require legislative appropriation for all Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund monies allocated for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands by the U.S. Congress pursuant to Title VI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 801 et seq.) as amended by [the American Rescue Plan]; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. DONALD M. MANGLONA of Rota, Precinct 7 (*for himself*, Representatives, Celina R. Babauta, Richard T. Lizama, Edwin K. Propst, Christina M.E. Sablan, Leila H.F.C. Staffler, and Denita Kaipat Yangetmai) on March 16, 2021.

H. B. NO. 22-34: To provide a tax credit for taxpayers who make donations of cash or food supplies to a qualified local food pantry, homeless shelter, or soup kitchen. Introduced by REP. CELINA R. BABAUTA of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for herself*) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H. B. NO. 22-35: To add a provision to prohibit convicted felons from possessing firearms and/or ammunition; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. CELINA R. BABAUTA of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for herself*) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

H. B. NO. 22-36: To repeal and reenact 6 CMC §4115 to provide better clarity for trial courts to impose sentences. Introduced by REP. CELINA R. BABAUTA of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for herself*) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

H. B. NO. 22-37: To amend Title 6, Division 3, Chapter 2 of the Commonwealth Code by establishing a penalty provision for criminal defendants who fail to appear in court on their scheduled date. Introduced by REP. CELINA R. BABAUTA of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for herself*) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

H. B. NO. 22-38: To amend Title 6, Division 5, Chapter 3, Article 2. Protection of Abused Children, to enact a new §5326. Discovery of evidence of child abuse or recordings of child witnesses, and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. CELINA R. BABAUTA of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for herself*, Representative Christina M.E. Sablan) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

H. B. NO. 22-39: To amend Title 6, Division 6, Chapter 5. Witnesses, by adding a new §6503. Witness to Child Outcry of Abuse, and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. CELINA R. BABAUTA of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for herself*, Representative Christina M.E. Sablan) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

H. B. NO. 22-40: To establish provisions for jaywalking; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. JOSEPH A. FLORES of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Representatives Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero, John Paul P. Sablan, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

H. B. NO. 22-41: To amend 9 CMC §8209 by removing the seven-day grace period for motorists who violate 9 CMC §§8203 and 8204; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. JOSEPH A. FLORES of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Representatives Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero, John Paul P.

Sablan, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

H. B. NO. 22-42: To amend 4 CMC §1943 to authorize developer infrastructure tax credits for appropriate Chamorro and Carolinian culture designs; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. JOSEPH A. FLORES of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Representatives Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero, John Paul P. Sablan, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H. B. NO. 22-43: To create an anti-littering incentive program by providing a reward for persons reporting violations of the Litter Control Act; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. JOEL C. CAMACHO of Saipan, Precinct 4 (*for himself*, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada; Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Ivan A. Blanco, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph A. Flores, Richard T. Lizama, Donald M. Manglona, and Patrick H. San Nicolas) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.

H. B. NO. 22-44: To conserve, protect, and enhance the CNMI’s native plants and trees for generations to come and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. JOEL C. CAMACHO of Saipan, Precinct 4 (*for himself*, Representatives Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Celina R. Babauta, Ivan A. Blanco, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph A. Flores, Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero, Donald M. Manglona, and Patrick H. San Nicolas) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.

H. B. NO. 22-45: To authorize the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Department of Finance in consultation with Department of Public Works to enter into a loan agreement for a sum up to \$16,800,000.00 for the construction and improvement of roads in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Introduced by REP. BLAS JONATHAN “BJ” T. ATTAO of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for himself*, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada; Celina R. Babauta, Ivan A. Blanco, Joel C. Camacho, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph A. Flores, Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero, Richard T. Lizama, Donald M. Manglona, John Paul P. Sablan, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means and to the House Committee on Public Utilities, Transportation, and Communications.

H. B. NO. 22-46: To repeal and re-enact 4 CMC 1402 (g) to allocate 10 percent of the excise tax to the Solid Waste Management Revolving Fund. Introduced by REP. BLAS JONATHAN “BJ” T. ATTAO of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for himself*, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada; Celina R. Babauta, Ivan A. Blanco, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph A. Flores, Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero, Richard T. Lizama, John Paul P. Sablan, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 16, 2021; was moved and placed on the Bill Calendar.

H. L. B. NO. 22-4: To appropriate up to Two Hundred Two Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety-Six US Dollars (\$202,996.00) of the Earned Bond Interest Income collected for the Second Senatorial District that has been identified by the Commonwealth Development Authority as available for appropriations; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. PATRICK H. SAN NICOLAS of Tinian, Precinct 6 (*for himself*) on March 16, 2021.

H. L. B. NO. 22-5: To appropriate funds specifically allotted to the Second Senatorial District under Public Law 18-30, as amended; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. PATRICK H. SAN NICOLAS of Tinian, Precinct 6 (*for himself*) on March 16, 2021.

H. L. B. NO. 22-6: To appropriate funds specifically allotted to the First Senatorial District under Public Law 18-30, as amended; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. DONALD M. MANGLONA of Rota, Precinct 7 (*for himself*) on March 16, 2021.

H. RES. NO. 22-4: To congratulate and honor all the women in the Commonwealth as we celebrate their contributions and achievements during the month of March 2021 proclaimed as CNMI Women’s Month and March 8th as International Women’s Day. Introduced by REP. DENITA KAIPAT YANGETMAI of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for herself*, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada; Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Celina R. Babauta, Sheila J. Babauta, Ivan A. Blanco, Joel C. Camacho, Vicente C. Camacho, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph A. Flores, Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero, Richard T. Lizama, Donald M. Manglona, Edwin K. Propst, Christina M.E. Sablan, John Paul P. Sablan, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Leila H.F.C. Staffler, Edmund S. Villagomez, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 16, 2021; placed on the Resolution Calendar.

H. J. R. NO. 22-1: To congratulate and honor all the women in the Commonwealth as we celebrate their contributions and achievements during the month of March 2021 proclaimed as CNMI Women’s Month and March 8th as International Women’s Day. Prefiled by: REP. DENITA KAIPAT YANGETMAI of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for herself*, Representative Christina M.E. Sablan) – Withdrawn March 16, 2021.

H. J. R. NO. 22-2: Strongly supports a delay in the proposed coral critical habitat designation process by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) until such time as the 5-year coral status review and coral recovery plan can be completed, and have the Department of Lands and Natural Resources work in coordination with NMFS in identifying appropriate coral critical habitat for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) using Best Scientific Information Available. Introduced by REP. BLAS JONATHAN “BJ” T. ATTAO of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for himself*, Representatives Ivan A. Blanco, John Paul P. Sablan, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 16, 2021; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.

C. RES. NO. 22-1: To extend our sincere condolences and sympathies to the family of the late Honorable Michael Napu King Aldan and to honor his memory whose worthy endeavors contributed to the quality of life in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Introduced by REP. PATRICK H. SAN NICOLAS of Tinian, Precinct 6 (*for himself*, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada; Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Celina R. Babauta, Sheila J. Babauta, Ivan A. Blanco, Joel C. Camacho, Vicente C. Camacho, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph A. Flores, Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero, Richard T. Lizama, Donald M. Manglona, Edwin K. Propst, Christina M.E. Sablan, John Paul P. Sablan, Leila H.F.C. Staffler, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita K. Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 16, 2021; placed on the Resolution Calendar.

C. RES. NO. 22-2: To extend our sincere condolences and sympathies to the family of the late Honorable Joaquin Hoashi Borja and to honor his memory whose admirable endeavors contributed to the quality of life in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Introduced by Introduced by REP. PATRICK H. SAN NICOLAS of Tinian, Precinct 6 (*for himself*, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada; Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Celina R. Babauta, Sheila J. Babauta, Ivan A. Blanco, Joel C. Camacho, Vicente C. Camacho, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph A. Flores, Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero, Richard T. Lizama, Donald M. Manglona, Edwin K. Propst, Christina M.E. Sablan, John Paul P. Sablan, Leila H.F.C. Staffler, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita K. Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 16, 2021; placed on the Resolution Calendar.

C. RES. NO. 22-3: To honor and commend Rose Lifofoi Igitol for her utmost dedication and commitment to the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) and the Guam-CNMI Committee. Introduced by REP. CELINA R. BABAUTA of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for herself*, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada; Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Sheila J. Babauta, Ivan A. Blanco, Joel C. Camacho, Vicente C. Camacho, Angel A. Demapan, Joseph A. Flores, Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero, Richard T. Lizama, Donald M. Manglona, Edwin K. Propst, Christina M.E. Sablan, John Paul P. Sablan, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Leila H.F.C. Staffler, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 16, 2021; placed on the Resolution Calendar.