



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TWENTY-SECOND NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

SPECIAL SESSION, 2022

LEGISLATIVE JOURNAL

1st Day, Third Special Session

Monday, June 13, 2022

The House of Representatives of the Twenty-Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature convened its First Day, Third Special Session on Monday, June 13, 2022 at 2:08 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 eighteen members were present; Representatives Sheila Therese J. Babauta and Donald M. Manglona were absent and excused.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With 18 members present and 2 absent it constitutes a quorum for today's session. Please note that Representative Donald Manglona is here by excused. We have Representative Propst present with us virtually. Does anybody have any word on Representative Sheila Babauta? Recognize Rep. Staffler.

Representative Leila Haveia F.C. Staffler: Thank you, Speaker. I believe that her letter of absence is forthcoming. I had messaged her during our leadership meeting and she said that it is forthcoming.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Staffler. Clerk, please take note of that. Thank you. We now move down to item II, Public Comments. Please state your name and the entity you represent. You'll be given three-minutes and if you need more time, we can grant that. Floor's open now for public comments, thank you.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following individual made comments:

Ms. Kina Peter, Public Auditor – Office of the Public Auditor

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you. Ms. Peter.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Representative Tina Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: May I just request that a copy of Ms. Peter's comments be circulated to all of the members? During the session.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: That's what I was going to get to the Sergeant-at-Arms, if she would like to submit it for our review and for record.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Yeah.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Yeah. Thank you, Rep. Tina and thank you, Sarge. Floor is still open for public comments. With no further public comments, we'll move down to item III, Adoption of Journals, and we have none. We now move down to item IV, Introduction of Bills and I recognize Representative Vicente Camacho.

ADOPTION OF JOURNALS

None

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

House Bills:

Representative Vicente C. Camacho: Thank you, Speaker. May I make a statement? Before I introduce the bill?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Proceed.

Representative Vicente C. Camacho: Thank you. I want to thank the House leadership for affording me the privilege to have served as a member of the House Judiciary and Governmental Operations (JGO) Committee. I am honored to serve our people and this honorable body. As we worked through the audio's fact finding process, addressing public corruption, I asked myself, why would anyone engage in acts that would violate the public trust? In speaking toward people in our community, the one common response to that question was the laws are too lenient, there's no deterrence. House Bill 22-104, cited as the CNMI Public Servant Anti-Corruption Act of 2022 addresses those issues of leniency and lack of deterrence to such acts that when perpetrated violates the public trust. I am honored and privileged to now introduce House Bill 22-104.

Representative Vicente C. Camacho officially introduced the following bill:

H. B. NO. 22-104

To amend Title 1, Division 8 of the Commonwealth Code by adding a new Chapter to enact provisions associated with public corruption, official misconduct, other unlawful influence and related offenses for public officials; and for other purposes.

REP. VICENTE C. CAMACHO of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for himself*, Representatives Joel C. Camacho, Richard T. Lizama, Corina L. Magofna, Donald M. Manglona, Christina M.E. Sablan, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul)
(REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS)

The Chair referred House Bill 22-104 to the Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

The Chair directed the members to House Local Bills.

House Local Bills:

Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas officially introduced the following bills:

H. L. B. NO. 22-35

To appropriate \$140,000.00 from revenues collected from poker fees in the Second Senatorial District; and for other purposes.

REP. PATRICK H. SAN NICOLAS of Tinian, Precinct 6 (*for himself*)

H. L. B. NO. 22-36

To make supplemental appropriations for the personnel and operations of the Tinian Casino Gaming Control Commission for Fiscal Year 2022 pursuant to 10 CMC § 2581 [Tinian Local Law 21-9] and 1 CMC § 1405(a) [Public 11-17].

REP. PATRICK H. SAN NICOLAS of Tinian, Precinct 6 (*for himself*)

The Chair directed the members to House Legislative Initiatives.

House Legislative Initiatives:

Representative Corina L. Magofna officially introduced the following initiative:

H. L. I. NO. 22-2

To amend Article III, Section 12 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to authorize the election of a Public Auditor; and for other purposes.

REP. CORINA L. MAGOFNA of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for herself*, Representatives Edwin K. Propst, Vicente C. Camacho, Richard T. Lizama, Donald M. Manglona, and Denita Kaipat Yangetmai)
(REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS)

The Chair referred House Legislative Initiative 22-2 to the Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

The Chair directed the members to item V, Introduction of Resolutions and recognized Representative

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

House Resolutions:

Representative Corina L. Magofna officially introduced the following resolution and request that the resolution be introduced as a Committee of the Whole:

H. RES. NO. 22-20

To strongly urge Governor Ralph DLG. Torres to issue a new \$1,000 Commonwealth Utilities Corporation utilities voucher to provide much needed financial relief to all qualified households in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

REP. CORINA L. MAGOFNA of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for herself*, Representatives Vicente C. Camacho, Richard T. Lizama, Donald M. Manglona, Edwin K. Propst, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Edmund S. Villagomez, and Denita Kaipat Yangetmai)

The Chair placed House Resolution 22-20 to the Resolution Calendar.

The Chair officially introduced the following resolution and request that the resolution be introduced by the Committee as a Whole:

H. RES. NO. 22-21

To remember and honor the Late Elias Parong Sablan for his munificent dedication, contributions, and sacrifices that left an indelible impact in the lives of the people of Saipan by being one of the very first island local leaders to organize the political, social, and economic trajectory of Saipan post-World War II and steered the progress for the people of Saipan to return to self-sufficiency.

REP. EDMUND S. VILLAGOMEZ of Saipan, Precinct 3, (*for himself*, Representatives Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Celina R. Babauta, Joel C. Camacho, Richard T. Lizama, Edwin K. Propst, Christina M.E. Sablan, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul)

There was no objection; the Chair placed House Resolution 22-21 to 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 Messages from the Governor:

GOV. COMM. 22-130: (5/26/2022) Certifying and granting approval for Ms. Nicolette Deleon Guerrero Villagomez, Civil Engineer, at the Office of Infrastructure and Recovery Program to receive an annual salary of \$90,000. [*For info*]

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

SENATE COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk announced the following Senate Communications:

SEN. COMM. 22-95: (5/31/2022) Returning H. J. R. 22-15, entitled, “*To recognize Community College Month in the month of April and to commend the Northern Marianas College for the reaffirmation of its accreditation for a historic eight-year term and its contributions to the workforce development needs of the Commonwealth.*”, which was passed by the Senate without amendments on May 26, 2022. [*For info*]

SEN. COMM. 22-96: (5/31/2022) Transmitting for House action S. J. R. NO. 22-11, entitled, “*Requesting Governor Torres and the Secretary of Finance to provide ARPA funds for a bonus for government and private employees who did not receive a bonus.*”, which was adopted by the Senate on May 26, 2022. [*For action*]

SEN. COMM. 22-97: (5/31/2022) Transmitting for House action S. J. R. NO. 22-12, entitled, “*To acknowledge and commemorate Cielo Gutierrez Long for her unselfish contributions to the community as a scholar and a member of the 17th and 18th Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Youth Congress.*”, which was adopted by the Senate on May 26, 2022. [*For action*]

SEN. COMM. 22-98: (5/31/2022) Returning H. B. No. 22-22, HD1, entitled, “*To establish laws to regulate bioprospecting activities within the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in order to ensure prior, informed consent and equitable sharing of benefits.*”, which was passed by the Senate with amendments on May 26, 2022, in the form of **H. B. No. 22-22, HD1, SD1**. [*For action on Senate amendments*]

SEN. COMM. 22-99: (6/2/2022) Transmitting a certified copy of Senate Resolution No. 22-22, entitled, “*To acknowledge and honor Marian Aldan-Pierce for her passionate and devoted contributions to her profession, our community and the entire Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.*”, which was adopted by the Senate on May 26, 2022. [*For info*]

SEN. COMM. 22-100: (6/2/2022) Transmitting a certified copy of Senate Resolution No. 22-23, entitled, “*To recognize and honor Jose Dela Cruz for his devoted contributions to agricultural practices on the island of Tinian and the entire Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.*”, which was adopted by the Senate on May 26, 2022. [*For info*]

SEN. COMM. 22-101: (6/2/2022) Transmitting a certified copy of Senate Commemorative Resolution No. 22-02, entitled, “*To recognize and commend Mr. David Mangarero Sablan for his notable accomplishments, tireless service, and remarkable contributions to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the people.*”, which was adopted by the Senate on May 26, 2022. [*For info*]

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader made a motion to accept Senate Communications 22-95 to 22-101 so they may become property of the House.

The motion was seconded.

There was no discussion and the motion to accept Senate Communications 22-95 to 22-101 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 22-96 (S.J.R. 22-11) referred to the Committee on Ways and Means*
- *Senate Communication 22-97 (S.J.R. 22-12) moved to the Resolution Calendar for action*
- *Senate Communication 22-98 (H.B. 22-22, HD1, SD1) moved to the Bill Calendar for action*

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. 22-85: (5/31/2022) From Representative Guerrero informing the Speaker that he will be out of the Commonwealth on personal matters from June 2—June 5, 2022 and request to be excused from any and all official functions during his absence. [*For info*]

HSE. COMM. 22-86: (6/2/2022) From Representative Staffler informing the Speaker that she will be out of the Commonwealth on personal business from June 5—June 10, 2022 and request to be excused from any and all official functions during her absence. [*For info*]

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

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

None

COMMUNICATIONS FROM DEPARTMENTS & AGENCIES

None

MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk announced the following Miscellaneous Communications:

MISC. COMM. 22-119: (6/2/2022) From Youth Congress Senator/Vice-Speaker Liekeila'akata T. Iakopo, 18th CNMI Youth Congress, informing of her resignation effective Wednesday, June 15, 2022 to pursue her educational and career endeavors. [*For info*]

There was no discussion; the Chair directed the members to item XII, Reports of Standing Committees and recognized the Clerk.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

The Clerk announced that there are 3 Standing Committee Reports ready for House action.

The Floor Leader made a motion to adopt the following Standing Committee Report:

S. C. R. NO. 22-50: Reporting on H. B. No. 22-102 entitled: "To exempt public corporations and autonomous agencies from paying the one percent (1%) Public Auditor Fee." *Your House Committee on Ways and Means recommends that the House pass the bill in the form of H. B. NO. 22-102, HSI.*

The motion was seconded.

Under discussion; the Chair recognized Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. This report reflects the efforts of the Ways and Means Committee to review and understand the concerns raised by the Commonwealth Ports Authority, the Office of the Public Auditor, the Department of Finance and the Federal Aviation Administration. The substitute bill represents the committee's attempt to strike a balance to provide some temporary limited relief for CPA and to afford the agency's time to resolve the question of whether the OPA 1% fee is unlawful revenue diversion or not. The committee recommends that the exemption apply only as to airport revenues, which is the matter in dispute. CPA does not dispute the 1% fee as to seaport revenues and would still be required to pay that fee for all of other non-airport related revenues since those issues are not in dispute. The original bill also proposed a sunset clause of three-years for exemption. The Speaker did share with the committee members that he preferred no sunset clause and a permanent exemption and in the spirit of compromise Chairman Donald Manglona, who's not able to be here today, proposed an amendment in committee to extend the sunset clause to five-years. We do recognize as you all already heard that OPA objects to this longer term and especially objects to a permanent exemption, but the committee report does include the comments, the correspondence and the audit reports that we receive from the Office of the Public Auditor and the Commonwealth Ports Authority and I'd like to ask Mr. Speaker and colleagues, if there are no objections that we also include as part of this committee report, the comments that we receive from OPA today during the public comments period. And we do recommend passage of the house substitute for House Bill 22-102. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Tina Sablan. Counsel, we can include today's public written public comments? I mean the auditor did you know, verbally expressed it today and so we can include it without any amendments to the – yeah, yeah. So, the

standing committee, so we'll just include it. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Clerk. Thank you, Counsel. I recognize Representative Vicente Camacho.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Speaker. Good afternoon colleagues and the viewing public. I would like to offer my thoughts on the ongoing matter between the Office of the Public Auditor, the Commonwealth Ports Authority and the CNMI Legislature. After weeks of hearings, sessions, testimonies, multiple suggestions of substitute legislations, opinions, stated concerns and so forth, a definitive yes or no answer to the question, does subsection 7831B under 1CMC violate any federal laws, mandates, rules, regulations, policies and/or practices? Depending on which semantics used sounds more convincing that the definitive answer seems to be both yes and no. The back and forth being from a federal perspective and not a local approach as it should be. Honorable men and women in prior legislatures saw the evolving process of self-governance as a young Commonwealth grows towards maturity by creating legislation reflective of granting autonomy to public instruments over a young Commonwealth. With the best intentions, from a local perspective, dishonorable men and women from prior legislatures granted MIHA, now NMHC, PSS and CHCC, not just some level of autonomy, but also exceptions from subsection 7831B, 1CMC. Specifically, as it relates to 1% remittance to be used as budgetary funding means for OPA. I, therefore recommend the following suggestive solutions, grant CPA, both airport and seaport, as well as CUC conditional exemptions that CPA communicate with FAA through already establishment of communications to have FAA provide the definitive answer that we've been seeking and for CPA to report back that exclusive answer to the legislature no later than 120 days from the time of its passages of this bill. That this conditional exceptions only applies to the 1% remittance or other parts of subsection 7831B, 1CMC under Section 12, Article III of the CNMI Constitution remains and is not affected. That OPA maintains all regulatory and investigative oversight provided by all CNMI laws pertaining to locally generated funds, expenditures, and use as well as administrative functions. To fund OPA directly through direct appropriations from this legislature by decreasing the appropriations budgets, budget of all instruments of the CNMI, not exempted from subsection 7831B by that same 1% with the cumulative total being directly appropriated to OPA at the start of every physical year like all other entities, this will ensure transparency and compliance. It is the very responsibility of this legislature to appropriate the budgetary needs of our government to provide the services that our people paying the form of taxes. It is not the responsibility of a department head in the current case, multiple department heads to decide when to provide the budgetary needs of the OPA. In closing, our people elected us to work together and find solutions. I know we can accomplish that. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Camacho. The floor is still open for discussions. Recognize Representative Leila Staffler.

Representative Leila Haveia F.C. Staffler: Thank you, Speaker. And thank you colleagues for sharing your thoughts so far. I, too feel very conflicted about this bill. I do hear from the OPA leadership about the concerns they have with respect to the objectives they must meet in order to keep accountability at the forefront of our government operations. They have to have that financial security with the 1%. I look at the FAA laws that do talk about revenue diversion and I do see that there is an issue that does need to be addressed. I guess, I feel that the urgency that is being presented to us is not documented enough in the form of a letter from FAA that actually says you are at risk of losing your grants at least I did not see that in anything that was provided to us thus far. And just looking at the history of FAA revenue diversion since 2019, an article

was put out just saying how there are a huge number of non-compliant jurisdictions that are still being addressed with FAA and in that number more than more than 90% of them were still non-compliant. So for me, I feel that the urgency to which this bill is being requested I'd like to see that letter from the FAA personally. And with that I yield thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Staffler. Floor is still open. We're ready.

There was no further discussion and the motion to adopt Standing Committee Report 22-50 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 Standing Committee Report:

S. C. R. NO. 22-48: Reporting on H. B. No. 22-86 entitled: "To amend 1 CMC Section 26018 Amendment of Vital Records." *Your Committee on Health and Welfare recommends that the House pass the bill in the form of **H. B. NO. 22-86, HD1.***

The motion was seconded.

Under discussion; the Chair recognized Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you colleagues. This report summarizes the work of the Health and Welfare Committee over the course of about a year now, beginning with the CNMI Pride Talks last June in 2021. Pride Talks was a policy round table that the committee hosted with LGBTQ Plus advocates and community partners to hold a dialogue on what the legislature could do to make the CNMI a better, safer, and more loving and respectful place for our LGBTQ Plus members of our community. So, this bill 22-86 is one of the products of Pride Talks and other discussions in public meetings that the committee has had over the last year. It would update and ease the process for trans-individuals to match the gender markers on their birth certificates to their gender identities. The committee received oral and written comments from LGBTQ plus advocates and allies from the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation and other concerned citizens all in support of this legislation. We also received a petition signed by approximately 500 people also in support of the bill and these comments and the petition have been made part of the report. The committee did amend the bill to incorporate amendments from CHCC's vital statistics registrar to require attestations under penalty of law, the signature of a parent, legal guardian or legal representative in the case of registrants who are under the age of 18 and who are requesting changes to their birth certificates. The committee recommends passage of the bill as amended, and I'm happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

There was no further discussion and the motion to adopt Standing Committee Report 22-48 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 Standing Committee Report:

S. C. R. NO. 22-49: Reporting on H. B. No. 22-87 entitled: “To prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation, to be known as the CNMI Equality Act or *Åktun Achá-Parehu* or *Alléghúl Aweewepagh* of 2021.” *Your House Committee on Health and Welfare recommends that the House pass H. B. No. 22-87 in its current form.*

The motion was seconded.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Discussion on the floor? Recognize Representative Tina Sablan and you have to read the title of the bill first.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. The CNMI Equality Act, also known as *Åktun Achá-Parehu* or *Alléghúl Aweewepagh* of 2021 is also the product of work that was undertaken by the Health and Welfare Committee. Again, since last year, beginning with CNMI pride talk. So, this bill would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, gender orientation, gender identity, and sexual orientation, and it inserts these protections wherever non-discrimination policies already exist in our statutes. The Health and Welfare Committee received written and oral comments in support of this bill during public meetings and beginning with Pride Talks and since then these comments included testimonies from LGBTQ Plus advocates, the Attorney General and a petition signed by approximately 500 people. The comments are made part of the report along with reports and data on the discrimination and harassment that LGBTQ Plus people face in the United States in the territories and here in the Marianas, including our own school system among our youth. I'm happy to answer any questions. We do recommend passage of this bill in its current form. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Sablan, good job. Floor is open for discussion. Ready? All right.

There was no further discussion and the motion to adopt Standing Committee Report 22-49 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair directed the members to item XV, Resolution Calendar and recognized the Floor Leader.

REPORTS OF SPECIAL AND CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

RESOLUTION CALENDAR

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

H. RES. NO. 22-20

To strongly urge Governor Ralph DLG. Torres to issue a new \$1,000 Commonwealth Utilities Corporation utilities voucher to provide much needed financial relief to all qualified households in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The motion was seconded.

Under discussion; the Chair recognized Representative Joel C. Camacho.

Representative Joel C. Camacho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to thank the author of this bill. I highly support this intent. I've got the third message today from a constituent of mine in precinct 4, whose power has been disconnected the third time and it's really heartbreaking. You know, I wish there was more that we could do was legislators to help them in that respect, but right now I think this is one way to address that issue and I thank you for that Rep. Corina. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Joel Camacho. I recognize Representative John Paul Sablan.

Representative John Paul P. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do also support this resolution proposed by are good colleague Corina and I thank her for offering this resolution. I just want to also ask her if it's not too much to ask and if she's open that we offer this as a committee as a whole. I know they're not all members and I'm not too sure if there's any objection if other members with this very good proposal. So, I just want to ask the author if she's okay if we can offer it as committee as a whole, thank you.

Several members voiced "no objection."

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Recognize Rep. Corina.

Representative Corina L. Magofna: Absolutely. May I also just make a brief statement.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Yes, recognized.

Representative Corina L. Magofna: And so you know, the intent of the resolution was to offer some immediate relief to our people and although the Governor has publicly come out and said that he will be issuing a \$500 stimulus card at which he also suggested that it could be used to pay CUC, I strongly feel that that stimulus can be used for food or other necessities, much needed necessities, and that this thousand dollar voucher can definitely assist our people with regards to their CUC bills, so with that, thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Magofna. Vice Speaker, you had your hands up earlier.

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao: I was actually going to ask the same point that Representative John Paul Sablan had brought up if it was all right that we introduce as a committee as the whole. Thank you, I yield Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Vice Speaker. Floor is still open for discussion. Ready.

There was no further discussion and the motion to adopt House Resolution 22-20 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:

H. RES. NO. 22-21

To remember and honor the Late Elias Parong Sablan for his munificent dedication, contributions, and sacrifices that left an indelible impact in the lives of the people of Saipan by being one of the very first island local leaders to organize the political, social, and economic trajectory of Saipan post-World War II and steered the progress for the people of Saipan to return to self-sufficiency.

The motion was seconded.

There was no discussion and the motion to adopt House Resolution 22-21 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:

S. J. R. NO. 22-12

To acknowledge and commemorate Cielo Gutierrez Long for her unselfish contributions to the community as a scholar and a member of the 17th and 18th Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Youth Congress.

The motion was seconded.

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

The Clerk called the roll on the motion for the adoption of Senate Joint Resolution 22-12 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	absent (<i>excused</i>)
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 Corina L. Magofna	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	absent (<i>excused</i>)
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 18 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 18 members present voting “yes,” Senate Joint Resolution 22-12 is hereby adopted.

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.

Under discussion; the Chair recognized Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you. May I just ask for clarification on what the suspension of rules pertains to?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the suspension is for Senate Bill 22-59 and House Bill 22-22, HD1, SD1.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: That's the bioprospecting.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Okay, thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Yeah. So just so we could act on these Senate communications that we just received today. Floor is still open for further discussion. Recognize Representative Patrick San Nicolas.

Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So this is to put all in the calendar for actions?

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Yes, to allow that we take action minus committee reports and other documents.

Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas: Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Floor is still open for discussion.

Several members voiced “ready.”

There was no further 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:

S. B. No. 22-59 A Bill for an Act to rename the Tinian Head Start/Early Head Start Center the “Magdalena M. Hofschneider Head Start/Early Head Start Center.

The motion was seconded.

Under discussion; the Chair recognized Representative Patrick San Nicolas.

Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to probably thank the JGO Chair for bringing this out for action and for passage today, I hope. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I ask that we passed this bill 22-59 today. Ms. Magdalena Hofschneider has selflessly served over 20 years in educating our young and youth, which all began all the way back to 1954. She was so dedicated woman to educate as a Head Start Coordinator unrecognized as prominent educator and a coordinator as well as Head Start Director. I just want to say that Mrs. Magdalena Hofschneider deserve this honor to have her name up there and I want to thank the author of this bill Senate President and all the members of the Senate that voted this bill to unanimously and I thank you all. It's been so honored that we have to act on this and I thank again our Chair of our JGO Committee and the representative our colleagues in this House. Thank you all and at this time, I yield.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative San Nicolas. I now recognize Representative Celina Babauta.

Representative Celina R. Babauta: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to my colleague from Tinian, Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas. It is my pleasure to have this bill passed today. I support it. I have known Denang as she is commonly known to family members, through her

children who were educated here in Saipan, in the eighties when there was no high school in Tinian at the time. I know that as a result of her dedication to education at least one of her children is also an educator and I want to say congratulations to Denang and her family for a well-deserved bill in her honor. I yield, Mr. Chairman. I mean, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Celina Babauta. Floor is still open for discussions. Ready? Alright, Clerk, please call the roll.

The Clerk called the roll on the motion for the passage of Senate Bill 22-59 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	absent (<i>excused</i>)
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 Corina L. Magofna	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	absent (<i>excused</i>)
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 18 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 18 members present voting “yes,” Senate Bill 22-59, hereby passes the House. Floor Leader.

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

H. B. No. 22-22, HD1, SD1

To establish laws to regulate bioprospecting activities within the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in order to ensure prior, informed consent and equitable sharing of benefits.

The motion was seconded.

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

Representative Angel A. Demapan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to thank the Senate for passing this bill with amendments from their side and now that we have it before us, I have reviewed the amendments from the Senate and find that the amendments don't dramatically alter the intent of the bill and just wanted to state for the record and to establish legislative intent that

the amendments that have been made on this bill, both in HD1 and SD1, and should we approve today in its entirety that we established legislative intended, these amendments and the language of this legislation pertains specifically to bioprospecting activities in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana islands. Having said that I, request the support of the members to pass this bill today. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Demapan. Floor’s still open for discussions. Ready? Okay, Clerk, please call the roll.

The Clerk called the roll on the motion for the passage of House Bill 22-22, House Draft 1, Senate 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	absent (<i>excused</i>)
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 Corina L. Magofna	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	absent (<i>excused</i>)
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 18 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 18 members present voting “yes,” House Bill 22-22, HD1, SD1, hereby passes the House. Floor Leader.

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

H. B. No. 22-86, HD1

To amend 1 CMC Section 26018 Amendment of Vital Records.

The motion was seconded.

Under discussion; the Chair recognized Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. I’d like to ask for your support for this legislation, which would update the Vital Statistics Act to be consistent with current medical standards of care and best practices and would make it easier for individuals to change the gender markers on their birth certificates to match their gender identities and this is so important for trans-individuals in our community who have had a hard

time doing so getting identification documents that match their gender identities and you need identification documents for many critical areas of life, whether you're applying for a job or trying to obtain some kind of benefit. The identification documents are so important and having them match is also just important for the health and wellbeing of trans-individuals in our community. This bill would remove the overly burdensome requirements that are now in the law that would mandate a surgical procedure and a court order for an individual's gender markers to change on a birth certificate. And then additionally, this bill provides more robust privacy protections for individuals who do seek to change their gender markers. And as I stated in the discussion on the committee report, we did incorporate recommendations from the registrar for vital statistics at CHCC to require attestations under penalty of law and the signature of a parent or guardian or legal representative for individuals under the age of 18. And the amended version of the bill has the full support of CHCC. So, I'd like to ask for your support as well, colleagues and it is fitting that we pass it now. It is one full year after CNMI Pride Talks last year and it is now pride month that we're celebrating and this is a bill that is really important to our LGBTQ community. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Tina Sablan. The floor is still open for discussion. We're ready. Okay, Clerk, please call the roll.

The Clerk called the roll on the motion for the passage of House Bill 22-86, 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	absent (<i>excused</i>)
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 Corina L. Magofna	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	absent (<i>excused</i>)
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 18 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 18 members present voting “yes,” House Bill number 22-86, HD1 hereby passes the House. Floor Leader.

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

H. B. No. 22-87

To prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation, to be known as the CNMI Equality Act or Æktun Achá-Parehu or Alléghúl Aweeweppagh of 2021.

The motion was seconded.

Under discussion; the Chair recognized Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. So again, this is pride month. June being pride month is about celebrating the contributions of the LGBTQ Plus members of our community and around the world and also raising awareness colleagues about the discrimination that LGBTQ Plus individuals still face in many areas of life. The equality act that is before us today would provide explicit protections in our law against discrimination on the basis of sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation. This bill prohibits such discrimination and employment and inserts such protections in areas where non-discrimination statutes already exist. Such as in the areas of health insurance, housing, civil service, various areas of commerce and jury duty. This bill again was strongly supported by the LGBTQ Plus advocacy community as well as other stakeholders, the Attorney General as well and I'd like to ask for your support today. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Tina Sablan. Any further discussions? Ready? Okay, Clerk, please call the roll.

The Clerk called the roll on the motion for the passage of House Bill 22-87 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	absent (<i>excused</i>)
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 Corina L. Magofna	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	absent (<i>excused</i>)
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 18 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 18 members present voting “yes,” House Bill number 22-87, hereby passes the House. I’d like to call for a quick recess.

The House recessed at 3:05 p.m.

RECESS

The House reconvened at 3:26 p.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: We rise back from recess, back to session. And before we went on recess, we were on Bill Calendar and we're on the last bill on the calendar and I recognize the Floor Leader.

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

H. B. NO. 22-102, HS1

To temporarily exempt the Commonwealth Ports Authority from paying the one percent (1%) Public Auditor Fee with respect to airport revenues.

The motion was seconded.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Discussion on the floor. Okay, if nobody wants to go, I will go ahead. If you look to your tables, I would like to offer a floor amendment hereby move to amend the current text in House Bill 22-102, HS1 and should this amendment pass it'll be HD1. I know on the top it says HS2, but just clarify with the Clerk and the Counsel regarding the title.

The Chair offered the following floor amendment:

Floor Amendment

H.B. 22-102, HS1

I hereby move to amend current text in H.B. 22-102, HS1

On page 1 in the Title: delete: "temporarily"

On page 3 line: 9 delete: "temporarily"

On page 3 lines: 11-14 delete: This exemption is subject to a sunset provision of five years from the effective date of this Act, to afford the agencies time to obtain a clear determination from federal grantors as to whether the payment of the 1% Public Auditor Fee from airport revenues is revenue diversion or not."

On page 4, delete "Section 3. Sunset Clause" in its entirety. Renumber all remaining sections accordingly.

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: June 13, 2022

Offered by: /s/ Rep. Edmund S. Villagomez

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:

/s/ Legal Counsel Joseph Taijeron

The motion was seconded.

Under discussion; the Chair recognized Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues. I do understand where you're coming from Mr. Speaker in proposing this amendment and I respect your position, but I want to state for the record that I am really uncomfortable about making this a permanent exemption for CPA in the absence of a clear and final determination from the Federal Aviation Administration. I am also uneasy about removing the sunset clause in light of OPA's strong objections and CPA's significant deficiencies in its audit reports, which have nothing to do with the OPA fee. The officials that Representative Vicente Camacho and I met with last week, along with yourself, Mr. Speaker and representatives from OPA the Department of Finance, the Senate President and CPA, those FAA officials were not from FAA headquarters and they could not give us a definitive answer one way or another about whether the OPA fee is unlawful revenue diversion or not. They did say as Ms. Peter noted in her comments earlier today that a written determination could be requested and that they could assist in running that request up the chain to headquarters for an answer. OPA has already initiated that process for elevating the inquiry to FAA headquarters. And I must say, I agree with Ms. Peter that it is not good governance colleagues to pass legislation of this magnitude with incomplete information and while the agencies are still working to resolve the issue and dispute. A temporary exemption offers a way of meeting everyone in the middle. A five-year exempt exemption is longer than the three years that were originally proposed and it's more than enough time to resolve the issues. This five-year exemption also represents another attempt at compromise. Mr. Speaker and colleagues and respectfully, I ask that we keep the sunset provision as is in this bill. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Tina Sablan. Floor is open for discussion. Recognize Representative Richard Lizama.

Representative Richard T. Lizama: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, colleagues. I've heard all testimony even from the OPA. At one point in time, this bill was supposed to be introduced or was introduced three, four years ago. So, what difference does it make now? What difference? I asked that we accept the recommendation. A good OPA who is now doing, in my own opinion since I've been back in Saipan, probably the only OPA that actually wanted to do her job. Thank you. I yield back.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Richard Lizama. Floor is still open for discussion. Recognize Representative Patrick San Nicolas.

Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, CPA is required by the federal grants to hire an independent auditor to audit their books, because that's already a federal requirement. The FAA views the 1% as revenue diversion, which violates their grant assurance requirements. This bill fixes that and it also has a safeguard for OPA because in the event that OPA provides any services to CPA, the bill allows OPA to bill CPA for the cost of those services. So, in this, I will support this bill and this amendment that we have on the floor. I yield, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative San Nicolas. Floor’s still open for discussion. Ready? Clerk, I'd like for this amendment to be a roll call. Please call the roll.

The Clerk called the roll on the motion to adopt the floor amendment to House Bill 22-102, House Substitute 1 offered by Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez:

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	yes
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao	yes
Representative Celina R. Babauta	yes
Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta	absent (<i>excused</i>)
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 Corina L. Magofna	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	absent (<i>excused</i>)
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	yes
Representative Ralph N. Yumul	yes
Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez	yes

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, 15 members voted “yes” and 3 members voted “no.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With 15 voting “yes,” the amendment is hereby adopted and we now move back to the main motion, which is now House Bill 22-102, HS1, HD1. Floor is open for discussion. Recognize Representative Tina Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Colleagues, I spent the weekend reviewing CPA's audit reports and their books really need cleaning. There are a lot of actual significant deficiencies and non-compliance issues that actually do play CPA at risk of losing federal funds, which the independent auditors point out and which the public auditor noted in her remarks today. The auditors found, for example, that CPA failed to monitor project costs from fiscal years 2005 through 2019. They identified a number of unallowable project costs that could possibly result in funding loss and non-compliance. They found that CPA lacked awareness of program reporting requirements for passenger facility charges and failed to follow up with carriers for these facility charge payments, failed to keep separate accounting records. There were so many issues and so many question costs and the thing to recognize here, that's important for our discussion today is that nowhere in these audit reports is the OPA fee one of these issues. The OPA fee has never been cited in CPA's audit reports as a question cost that could possibly put CPA at risk of non-compliance and losing federal funds. The OPA fee has also never been charged or reimbursed from federal grants. It's been booked as an expense assessed based on locally generated revenues as provided by our law. OPA maintains that from an accounting standpoint, this is an overhead cost or indirect cost that is allowed under FAA own regulations and guidance. And again, there still is no clear determination that this OPA fee is revenu, diversion. The FAA officials who came here said it may be, but they could not give us

that determination themselves and they said that question would have to be run of the chain for further review and clarification. So, it's not an issue that we have a clear answer on and OPA and Finance want that clarification. And the process of elevating that inquiry has already begun. And again, now that this is a permanent exemption that this bill would afford CPA, I'm extremely uneasy in making decisions like this in the absence of complete information and over the strong objections of the public auditor and also in light of CPA's long record of non-compliance, not just with the OPA fee, but actual non-compliance with federal requirements. I recognize that this bill represents an effort at compromise, but I think that we are setting a truly problematic precedent colleagues for undermining the integrity and the independence of the government's most important watchdog against waste, fraud and abuse funds. I see the OPA fee as OPA sees it. It's the cost of oversight that all agencies and entities of this government should share in and OPA has always been underfunded. Any exemption once granted is very hard to take back and I do think that we should seriously reconsider moving forward on this legislation and making it a permanent exemption for CPA. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Tina Sablan. Recognize Representative Richard Lizama.

Representative Richard T. Lizama: Thank you, Chairman and thank you colleagues. It was a hard decision if you looked at it, whether it's three-years or five-years permanent. I have to say “yes” to give them a try and I hope that someday in the future, the new legislation will look at it again, if that was effective or not. I yield back. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Lizama. Any further discussions? Recognize Representative Angel Demapan.

Representative Angel A. Demapan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I think the intent of this legislation has put us in a difficult position. We're kind of between a rock and a hard place. So, I want to believe that we all support the functions of OPA in this government and I also want to believe that we all support the functions of CPA in terms of keeping our ports open so that we don't chokehold our economy. I'm just wondering for the sake of discussion and pardon me, because I wasn't here in the previous session, but I hear that there is discussion ongoing to determine whether it is revenue diversion or not and if that is the case was there any discussion in the House on whether or not we should wait for that determination? What I hate to see is that we move forward with it today, because there's no definitive determination and then this bill becomes law and the result comes back that it is a revenue diversion and then we put the economy in jeopardy. So, we're in a very difficult position now and I think that, you know, I would like to support as much as possible both entities, but I just wanted to know whether there's that active discussion on whether we should wait for definitive determination or not before we make this decision. I just, you know, I'm inclined to support the bill because of the sake of our economy by way of keeping our airports and seaports open, but I don't want it to backfire also that when this determination comes out, unfavorable, that we have to rush back to the table to fix it legislatively or that, you know, that small window of between being problematic and fixing the problem becomes detrimental to our livelihoods here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Representative Leila Haveia F.C. Staffler: Thank you, Speaker. And I'd like to thank colleague Demapan for bringing that up. I feel the exact same way. Both entities are important, both for our economy, for our access to the ports, both air and sea for our people and CPA because of the accountability that we know is so important based on all of the things that we've seen happen over the course of so many years and so is it possible to keep this on calendar a little bit longer in order to wait for that information is my question and thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Staffler. If the members don't mind, can I go ahead and just chime in? I know Representative Angel also had his concerns and Representative Staffler as well. You know, the meeting with CPA and FAA and this was also a meeting that I've had a few weeks prior to our most recent meeting where Representative Camacho and Representative Tina Sablan were present. You know, their main issue is revenue diversion in any form and with regarding the agency, it's that 1% OPA fee. Now, as mentioned by Representative Tina and even during our discussions, you know, they mentioned that the OPA fee is not really a non-compliance, but my understanding is because that fee has never been remitted. So, how do you say something is revenue diversion when you haven't diverted it yet? And for my end like leader Demapan mentioned, you know, we are caught between a rock and a hard place, and I'd rather on the side if it is, you know, we don't have that, like you say, the chokehold on our airport, which is very important to our economy and not only for commercial reasons, but also for our residents and our people that travel for all kinds of reasons alike. Thank you. Floor's still open for discussions. Recognize Representative Tina Sablan.

Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker for that background and thank you, leader Demapan and Rep. Staffler for raising the question of whether we could wait for some further clarification. I certainly have no issues with that. That would be my preference quite honestly. And you know, I think this bill when there was a sunset provision, the idea was to try to address the CPA concern with the kind of urgency that they were communicating and to balance that against OPA's concern because they're OPA is concerned because there really wasn't a clear, definitive answer from FAA yet. Right? And they wanted time to really get that answer and I know that that process has begun and I think that, like there are meetings that are supposed to happen in the next couple of weeks. I have no objection to leaving this on the calendar. Maybe we could get an answer sooner rather than later. I would hope that we'd be able to get an answer sooner than the three-years or the five-years that we were originally proposing, but you're right that we are in a very difficult position and that, I think, you know, we all share an interest in supporting both OPA as well as CPA and not undermining one you know in favor of the other, especially if we don't have to. Right? And, you know, I will also say that that OPA expressed you know, an interest in getting clarification, because if it is revenue diversion there, they will not object to an exemption for the OPA fee for airport revenues. Right? Once they could get that clear answer, but it was just the absence of that clear answer that was troubling. So, I would support keeping this on calendar it and really getting a better idea of you know, how soon we could get that final determination from FAA. You know, it might be worthwhile as well to enlist the support or the assistance of our delegate in coordinating communications with FAA headquarters. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Tina Sablan. Floor's still open for discussion. Ready? Clerk, please call the roll.

The Clerk called the roll on the motion for the passage of House Bill 22-102, House Substitute 1, 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	absent (<i>excused</i>)
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 Corina L. Magofna	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	absent (<i>excused</i>)
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	yes
Representative Ralph N. Yumul	yes
Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez	yes

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, 15 members voted “yes” and 3 members voted “no.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With 15 members voting “yes,” House Bill 22-102, HS1, HD1 hereby passes the House. Thank you, members. That is the last on our Bill Calendar. We now move down to item XVII, Miscellaneous Business. Floor’s open. Recognize Representative Joel Camacho.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Representative Joel C. Camacho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you were all aware from our last SNILD session that the hosting for the Pacific Mini Games delegates will be held in June 21st and to further strengthen or to collaborate amongst our precincts, I’m respectfully asking because apparently, we are in charge of the food and the grounds and I believe that part of the logistics. So, I’m just respectfully asking if maybe each precinct can maybe pitch in at least one local dish, if that’s possible, at least the precincts in Saipan because this is a SNILD event. So, the event is in June 21st and I will create a group chat if that helps and maybe list down a list of dishes that possibly you guys can coordinate amongst your precincts to assist in this hosting. I greatly appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Joel Camacho. Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Ralph N. Yumul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My family and I would like to wish the Filipino community, a happy 124th Independence Day honoring their culture, history and also their sacrifice. Thank you.

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

Vice Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And this concern was brought up last week by a lot of the participants most especially the athletes that will be

participating representing the CNMI and the mini games that they haven't been granted administrative leave to prepare for these games. I understand that the games start this week and they've been traveling back and forth, whether it's here on Saipan or the athletes that are representing the CNMI from Rota and Tinian. They haven't been granted administrative leave in their travel time. They're actually going on personal leave right now to prepare for the game and it's a very unfortunate situation for our people that will be representing the CNMI. They're using up their annual leave to prepare for the games to represent the CNMI in these competitions and I just hope that the entities that they work for will follow through and grant admin. Leave. We're respectfully asking the Administration to allow entities to grant them admin. leave for their participation and their preparation for these events that we'll be hosting in the next week or two. So, with that being said we'd like to welcome our visitors from all the island nations across the Pacific. We welcome you guys' home to the CNMI and we hope you enjoy yourself and please be safe and take care. Thank you, guys. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Vice Speaker. Floor is still open under miscellaneous, recognize Representative Vicente Camacho.

Representative Vicente C. Camacho: Thank you, Speaker. I just wanted to inform this legislative body and the viewing public, the CNMI service members and veterans that I have requested the Office of the Attorney General for legal assistance to eligible CNMI service members and veterans individually or as a class seeking financial compensation for hearing loss and tinnitus caused by defective dual-sided black and yellow combat arms earplugs a 3M product provided by the United States Military from 2003 to 2015. As the Chair of the House Committee on Federal and Foreign Affairs. I, along with the committee members request any legal assistance. The Office of the Attorney General can provide to any and all eligible service members or veterans who are legal residents of the CNMI in line with various national lawsuits against 3M. To my knowledge, none are CNMI residents. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Camacho. Floor's still open under miscellaneous. We're ready? Ready. All right, we now move down to item XVIII, Announcements. Ready, members. All right, we now move down to Adjournment and I recognize the Floor Leader.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

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 3:54 p.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 May 25, 2022:

H. B. NO. 22-102: To exempt public corporations and autonomous agencies from paying the one percent (1%) Public Auditor Fee. Introduced by REP. EDMUND S. VILLAGOMEZ of Saipan, Precinct 3, (*for himself, Representatives Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Celina R. Babauta, Corina L. Magofna, Donald M. Manglona, Leila H.F.C. Staffler, and Ralph N. Yumul*) on May 25, 2022; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

[ADDED-5/25/2022] H. B. NO. 22-103: To amend P.L. 16-10 section 2 to allow for the construction of a regulation basketball court and volleyball court. Introduced by REP. DONALD M. MANGLONA of Rota, Precinct 7 (*for himself*) on May 25, 2022; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H. L. B. NO. 22-33: To appropriate one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00) from the poker licensing fee account (specifically under BU 3302); and for other purposes. Introduced by Rep. Donald M. Manglona of Rota, Precinct 7 (*for himself*) on May 25, 2022.

H. L. B. NO. 22-34: To appropriate one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000.00) from the Rota Municipal Scholarship Foundation Reserve account (specifically under BU 2301); and for other purposes. Introduced by Rep. Donald M. Manglona of Rota, Precinct 7 (*for himself*) on May 25, 2022.

House information on deadlines for override: None