

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TWELFTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
SECOND REGULAR SESSION, 2000

THIRTEENTH DAY

August 29, 2000

The House of Representatives of the Twelfth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature convened in its Thirteenth Day, Second Regular Session, on Tuesday, August 29, 2000, at 10:25 a.m., in the House Chamber, Capitol Hill, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Honorable Benigno R. Fitial, Speaker of the House presided.

A moment of silence was observed.

In accordance with Rule XIII, § 2(a), sixteen members were present. Representatives Jesus T. Attao and Alejo M. Mendiola, Jr. were excused.

Speaker Fitial: A quorum is duly constituted for the Thirteenth Day of our Second Regular Session. All members absent are excused.

ADOPTION OF JOURNALS

None

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

H. B. NO. 12-260: A Bill for an Act requiring any tobacco manufacturer selling cigarettes to consumers within Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to become a participating manufacturer in the tobacco master settlement agreement or to place specific amounts into a qualified escrow fund; and for other purposes.

Offered by: Rep. David M. Apatang and one other
Referred to: Committee on Commerce and Tourism

H. B. NO. 12-261: A Bill for an Act to amend 3 CMC 4437 (c); and for other purposes.

Offered by: Rep. Dino M. Jones
Referred to: Committee on Commerce and Tourism

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

None

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

Gov. Comm. 12-71 – August 25, 2000 – Informing the Legislature that he signed House Bill No. 21-16, HD1, SD1 (Fair Fishing Act of 2000), into **Public Law 12-14**.

Gov. Comm. 12-72 – August 25, 2000 – Informing the Legislature that he signed House Bill No. 12-115, HD1 (Lease-to-Own Housing Program), into **Public Law 12-15**.

Gov. Comm. 12-73 – August 25, 2000 – Informing the Legislature that he signed House Bill No. 12-131 (100% rebate on cash compensation from land exchanges), into **Public Law 12-16**.

Gov. Comm. 12-74 – August 25, 2000 – Informing the House Legislature that he signed House Local Bill No. 12-6, D2 (Amend Master Map of street names), into **Saipan Local Law 12-5**.

Gov. Comm. 12-75 – August 25, 2000 – Informing the Legislature that he disapproved House Bill No. 12-45 (Penalty for violation of Business Licensing Requirements).

Gov. Comm. 12-76 – August 25, 2000 – Informing the Legislature that he disapproved House Bill No. 12-154, HD1, SD1 (To amend the State Funeral Act).

The Chair recognized Rep. Hofschneider.

Rep. Hofschneider: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I just want to reiterate my appreciation to the House members and to you, Mr. Speaker, for expediently addressing the Governor's Communication 12-73, this is relating to 100% rebate on cash compensation from land exchanges. I hope that the Senate will act on it immediately. Thank you.

Speaker Fitial: Any further comments? Representative Tony Camacho?

Rep. A. Camacho: Mr. Speaker, on Governor's Communication 12-76, I thought we recalled this legislation?

Speaker Fitial: We recalled but the Senate failed to take action. So, it took its natural death. Perhaps we should have a state funeral for it. Anymore comments before we proceed?
None.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

None

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

The Chair recognized Rep. Hofschneider.

Rep. Hofschneider: Yes, Mr. Speaker. This is relating to a good article today that appeared on the front page relating to the statement of the good Chairman on JGO Committee and I want to commend him for raising that up. For the members' information, we have initiated in the Task Force couple of months back and have solicited the Attorney General's assistance to look into relieving or breaking away the DOC from DPS. It has similar problems with PSS over the years. As a result, DOC is left at the bottom of the totem pole so to speak, every year. My suggestion is, since the Chairman has been looking into this, I would like to invite him to take the lead with the Attorney General's Office and work with the Task Force to finalize that legislation that we have been embarked in doing. The Fire Department was also mention by the Chairman, but the Task Force's responsibility is to look at the prison division itself. So, perhaps by working together, the Chairman can include fire. It is logical, it is practical and it is timely that we do that, for the same reason that DOC has been experiencing the same difficulties over the years. Thank you.

Speaker Fitial: Anymore miscellaneous? Chairwoman Ichihara?

Chairwoman Ichihara: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is there anyway that we can get the 911 number independent for emergencies -- I just found out over the weekend that that is just a regular number during an emergency -- to prevent future mishaps. 911 number was dialed over the weekend three times and nobody was answering, and then, answering machine came on while the house was on fire. Fire hydrants again, Mr. Speaker, is not available especially in the old villages. I hope that our government will take a lead for future similar incidents especially when it involves lives. It is good that it happened in the morning, but if it was at night -- I just hope that that line would be available right there on the first ring.

Speaker Fitial: I never dial that number, are you saying that --

Chairwoman Ichihara: There was a house caught on fire and they were dialing 911 over the weekend and it took the Fire Department so many minutes because they couldn't reach those people that were responsible for 911. By the time the fire truck came to the place where the house was on fire, it was engulfed in flames. They were trying to get a hold of people from DPS to dispatch but it didn't get through.

Speaker Fitial: You are saying that that is not a dedicated line?

Chairwoman Ichihara: No. They said that it is a regular line and when they finally went through it was an answering machine. I am just concern about future household or any establishment that may be on fire and we cannot get to the proper – I am talking specifically for the Precinct II area, where it is an old village and even the fire hydrants around the neighborhood is not there. I am not sure if CUC has done its studies or any government agency that is responsible for that.

Speaker Fitial: I will look into that matter personally. I am not familiar with 911 because I never use it.

Chairwoman Ichihara: That is the number that even the students are being taught by DPS that any emergency, the students can always resort to that number and when the actual situation comes in, it doesn't work.

Speaker Fitial: Anymore miscellaneous before we proceed to Announcements? None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair recognized Chairman Tony Camacho.

Chairman A. Camacho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Do to the bill's concern, its better extensive -- I am announcing ahead of time that the Committee on Ways and Means will have a public hearing on September 20 on the Flat Tax Bill. We are now getting information and comments from individuals and departments. So, we are preparing ahead of time for the actual public hearing on September 20.

Speaker Fitial: Have you contacted the Senate if they plan to –

Chairman A. Camacho: No. We gave them a copy of the –

Speaker Fitial: ...to act on the commission, the tax commission that we proposed to establish?

Chairman A. Camacho: I'll do that this afternoon. But at least we have the process going.

Speaker Fitial: That is an important component of the Flat Tax Bill to have the commission established first. Chairwoman Ichihara?

Chairwoman Ichihara: The Education Committee will be meeting with NMC President and the Board of Regents tomorrow at 2:30 p.m. in the Conference Room. Thank you.

Speaker Fitial: Anymore announcements? If none, Floor Leader, recognized.

Floor Leader Babauta: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move to recess until tomorrow morning at 11:00.

The motion was seconded and carried by voice vote.

Speaker Fitial: The House stands recess until tomorrow at 11:00 a.m.

The House recessed at 10:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan P. Kaipat, Journal Clerk
House of Representatives