



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TWENTY-FIRST NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION, 2019

## LEGISLATIVE JOURNAL

1<sup>st</sup> Day, First Regular Session

Monday, January 14, 2019

*Master of Ceremony Jovano Q. Taitano: Hafa adai, tirow*, good morning, and welcome to the House of Representatives. We will now begin the House of Representatives' installation ceremony of the Twenty-First Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature. Before I introduce the members-elect, I ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort the Honorable Ralph Deleon Guerrero Torres, Governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; the Honorable Alexandro C. Castro, Chief Justice of the CNMI Supreme Court and Father Isidro Ogomoro to the dais. Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am honored to present to you the Representatives-Elect of the Twenty-First Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature. In memoriam of Representative-elect Francisco Santos Dela Cruz Representing Election District 1 Representative-Elect, representing Election District 5 Representative-Elect Lorenzo Iglecias Deleon Guerrero, representing Election District 1 Representative-Elect Edwin Kenneth Propst, representing Election District 4 Representative-Elect Sheila Therese Jack Babauta, representing Election District 1 Luis John Deleon Guerrero Castro, representing Election District 1 Representative-Elect Roman Cepeda Benavente, representing Election District 3 Representative-Elect Blas Jonathan Tenorio Attao, representing Election District 5 Representative-Elect Richard Tudela Lizama, representing Election District 4 Representative-Elect Joel Castro Camacho, representing Election District 6 from the island of Tinian and Aguiguan Representative-Elect Antonio San Nicolas Borja, representing Election District 7 from the island of Rota Representative-Elect Donald Manalang Manglona, representing Election District 1 Representative-Elect Joseph Arriola Flores, representing Election District 3 Representative-Elect Ivan Alafanso Blanco, representing Election District 3 Representative-Elect Ralph Naraja Yumul, representing Election District 3 Representative-Elect Edmund, representing Election District 2 Representative-Elect Christina Marie Elise Sablan, representing Election District 3 Representative-Elect Jose Ilo Itibus, representing Election-District 2 Representative-Elect John Paul Palacios Sablan, representing Election District 1 Floor Leader Pro-Tem Representative-Elect Joseph Lee Pan Tenorio Guerrero, representing Election District 1 Speaker Pro-Tem Representative-Elect Janet Ulloa Maratita. Please be seated. Along with our honorable and distinguished guests, present with us today, the Honorable Arnold I. Palacios, Lieutenant Governor of the CNMI; Diann T. Torres, First Lady of the CNMI; Wella S. Palacios, Second Lady of the CNMI; the Honorable Edward E. Manibusan, Attorney General of the CNMI; the Honorable John A. Manglona, Associate Justice, CNMI Supreme Court; the Honorable Theresa K. Kim-Tenorio, Associate Judge, CNMI Superior Court; from the United States District Court of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Honorable Ramona V. Manglona, Chief Judge; the Honorable Heather L. Kennedy, Magistrate Judge; the Honorable David M. Apatang, Mayor of the Municipality of Saipan; the Honorable Vicente C. Santos, Jr., Mayor of the Northern Islands; the Honorable Edwin P. Aldan, Mayor of the Municipality of Tinian and Aguiguan; the Honorable Efrain M. Atalig, Mayor of the Municipality of Rota; the Honorable Johnson Elimo, Governor of Chuuk; the Honorable Sendilina Lekka, Senator, Pohnpei State Legislature; *Ginen I Mina'trentai Sinko Na Liheslaturan Guahan* Honorable Tina M. Barnes, Speaker; Honorable William M. Castro, Minority Leader; Honorable Amanda L. Shelton; Honorable Dr. Kelly Marsh Taitano; Honorable Louis

B. Muna; the Honorable June U. Blas, Mayor of the Municipality of Barrigada, Guam; Mr. Angel R. Sablan, Executive Director of the Mayor’s Council of Guam; from the 15<sup>th</sup> Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council Honorable Debra T. Camacho, Honorable Ana D. Castro, Honorable Antonia M. Tudela; from the 17<sup>th</sup> Tinian and Aguiguan Municipal Council Honorable Esteven SN. King, Jr., Honorable Thomasa P. Mendiola, Honorable Patrick A. Manglona; from the 17<sup>th</sup> Rota Municipal Council Honorable Simeon E. Taisacan; from the 16<sup>th</sup> CNMI State Board of Education Honorable Mary Lou S. Ada, Honorable Herman M. Atalig, Honorable Andrew L. Orsini, Honorable Janice A. Tenorio. Accompanying the Governor, we have Department Secretaries and Directors. Families, friends, and supporters of our members-elect, I welcome all of you to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Legislature, House of Representatives. Please all rise. I now call upon the Department of Public Safety Color Guard for the posting of the Colors, and I also call upon Ms. Darlene Aldan to lead us in the singing of the United States National and Commonwealth Anthems.

*(National and Commonwealth Anthems were sung)*

*Master of Ceremony Jovano Q. Taitano:* Please remain standing as I call upon Father Isidro Ogumoro for the Invocation.

*(Father Isidro Ogumoro gave the Invocation)*

*Master of Ceremony Jovano Q. Taitano:* Thank you, Father Isidro. Please be seated. It is with great honor and privilege that I call on Speaker Pro Tem, Representative-Elect Janet Ulloa Maratita to officially call the House of Representatives’ Organizational Session of the Twenty-First Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature to order. Speaker Pro Tem, please.

## **CALL TO ORDER**

*The House of Representatives of the Twenty-First Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature convened its First Day, First Regular Session on the Fourteenth day of January the year Two Thousand and Nineteen at 10:24 a.m., in the House Chamber on Capitol Hill, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.*

*The Honorable Representative-Elect Janet U. Maratita, Speaker Pro Tem presided.*

Speaker Pro Tem Janet U. Maratita: Thank you, Mr. Taitano. *Buen filisitation para todus hamyo.* As such, I also welcome all our distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen and to Father Isidro Ogumoro thank you very much for your prayers and Honorable Chief Justice Alexandro Castro welcome to the House of Representatives. *Hafa adai and tirow,* I now call this Twenty-First Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature, House of Representatives Organizational Session to order. At this time, I will now recognize our House Clerk to call the roll, please.

## **CALL OF THE ROLL BY ELECTION PRECINCTS**

*The Clerk called the roll in numerical order by election precincts:*

### **Election District 1**

Representative-Elect Roman Cepeda Benavente	Present
Representative-Elect Luis John Deleon Guerrero Castro	Present
Representative-Elect Joseph Arriola Flores	Present
Representative-Elect Joseph Lee Pan Tenorio Guerrero	Present

Representative-Elect Janet Ulloa Maratita	Present
Representative-Elect Edwin Kenneth Propst	Present
<b>Election District 2</b>	
Representative-Elect Christina Marie Elise Sablan	Present
Representative-Elect John Paul Palacios Sablan	Present
<b>Election District 3</b>	
Representative-Elect Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao	Present
Representative-Elect Ivan Alafonso Blanco	Present
Representative-Elect Francisco Santos Dela Cruz	Absent
Representative-Elect Jose Ilo Itibus	Present
Representative-Elect Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez	Present
Representative-Elect Ralph Naraja Yumul	Present
<b>Election District 4</b>	
Representative-Elect Sheila Therese Jack Babauta	Present
Representative-Elect Joel Castro Camacho	Present
<b>Election District 5</b>	
Representative-Elect Lorenzo Iglecias Deleon Guerrero	Present
Representative-Elect Richard Tudela Lizama	Present
<b>Election District 6</b>	
Representative-Elect Antonio San Nicolas Borja	Present
<b>Election District 7</b>	
Representative-Elect Donald Manalang Manglona	Present

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Madame Speaker Pro Tem, 19 Representatives-Elect are present and 1 member is absent.

Speaker Pro Tem Janet U. Maratita: Thank you, Clerk. Let the record reflect that 19 Representatives-Elect are present and a quorum is hereby constituted. I would like to state for the record that the absence of the late Representative-Elect Honorable Francisco Santos Dela Cruz will be greatly be felt in this House. We extend our deepest and sincerest condolence, thoughts and prayers to his wife Lisa, his children, grandchildren and family.

### **SWEARING-IN OF MEMBERS**

Speaker Pro Tem Janet U. Maratita: We now go on to our next Order of Business and that is the swearing-in of Representatives-Elect. My fellow Representatives-Elect, I ask each one of you to rise for our swearing-in as members of this House of Representatives and I ask the Honorable Alexandro C. Castro, Chief Justice of the CNMI Supreme Court to administer the Oath of Office.

*Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro*: Please raise your right hand and repeat after me.

The following was repeated by all the Representatives-Elect:

“I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Covenant to establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United

States of America, the applicable provisions of the Constitution, laws and treaties of the United States of America, and that I will faithfully discharge my duties as a Representative of the 21<sup>st</sup> Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature to the best of my ability, so help me God.”

*Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro:* Congratulations.

Speaker Pro Tem Janet U. Maratita: You may be seated, members. Thank you, Chief Justice for the swearing-in of the members of this House. The next Order of Business is the Introduction and Adoption of House Rules. I will now recognize Floor Leader Pro Tem Joseph Lee Pan Tenorio Guerrero.

### **INTRODUCTION AND ADOPTION OF THE HOUSE RULES**

Floor Leader Pro Tem Joseph Lee Pan T. Guerrero: Thank you, Madame Speaker Pro Tem. I am honored to introduce **House Resolution Number 21-1, “A House Resolution to adopt the Rules for the House of Representatives and to appoint an Ad Hoc Committee to review the rules; and for other purposes.”** and I move for its adoption.

*The motion was seconded.*

Speaker Pro Tem Janet U. Maratita: Thank you, Floor Leader Pro Tem. The motion is for the adoption and it has been seconded. Discussion on the motion?

*Several members voiced “ready.”*

*There was no discussion and the motion to adopt House Resolution 21-1 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.*

Speaker Pro Tem Janet U. Maratita: The motion to adopt House Resolution 21-1 is carried by a voice vote. We will now move on to the next Order of Business, the Election of Speaker. I recognize Representative Ivan Blanco.

### **ELECTION OF SPEAKER**

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: Thank you, Madame Speaker Pro Tem. It is with privilege and honor to nominate the Honorable Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the 21<sup>st</sup> Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature. So move.

*The motion was seconded.*

Speaker Pro Tem Janet U. Maratita: A nomination has been placed on the floor for Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao for Speaker and has been seconded. Are there any other nominations? I hereby recognize Representative Ralph Yumul.

Representative Ralph N. Yumul: Thank you, Madame Speaker Pro Tem. I move to close nominations.

*The motion was seconded.*

Speaker Pro Tem Janet U. Maratita: The motion is to close the nomination. Ready?

*Several members voiced “ready.”*

*There was no discussion and the motion to close nomination was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.*

Speaker Pro Tem Janet U. Maratita: I would now recognize the Clerk to call the roll for the nomination offered.

*The Clerk called the roll for the nomination of Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao to serve as the Speaker for the House of Representatives with the following results:*

Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao	yes
Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta	yes
Representative Roman C. Benavente	yes
Representative Ivan A. Blanco	yes
Representative Antonio SN. Borja	yes
Representative Joel C. Camacho	yes
Representative Luis John DLG. Castro	yes
Representative Lorenzo I. Deleon Guerrero	yes
Representative Joseph A. Flores	yes
Representative Joseph Lee Pan T. Guerrero	yes
Representative Jose I. Itibus	yes
Representative Richard T. Lizama	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	yes
Representative Janet U. Maratita	yes
Representative Edwin K. Propst	yes
Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan	yes
Representative John Paul P. Sablan	yes
Representative Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez	yes
Representative Ralph N. Yumul	yes

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Madame Speaker Pro Tem, all 19 members present voted for Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao to the Office of the Speaker.

Speaker Pro Tem Janet U. Maratita: Thank you, Clerk. With all members voting, Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao is hereby duly elected to the House of Representative as Speaker of the 21<sup>st</sup> House of Representatives. May I ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort the Speaker of the House to the dais.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: My fellow colleagues, it’s great privilege and honor that you have bestowed on to me your confidence and trust by electing me to serve as your Speaker. Thank you very much. Let us move on to the Election of the Vice Speaker. I recognize Representative Roman Benavente.

## ELECTION OF VICE SPEAKER

Representative Roman C. Benavente: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege that I nominate Representative Lorenzo Iglecias Deleon Guerrero to the Office of the Vice Speaker for the 21<sup>st</sup> House of Representative. So move.

*The motion was seconded.*

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: A nomination has been placed on the floor for Representative Lorenzo Iglecias Deleon Guerrero to the Office of the Vice Speaker and has been seconded. Are there any other nominations? I hereby recognize Representative Jose Itibus.

Representative Jose I. Itibus: Mr. Speaker, I move to close nomination.

*The motion was seconded.*

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: The motion is to close nominations. Ready?

*Several members voiced “ready.”*

*There was no discussion and the motion to close nomination for the Office of Vice Speaker for the House of Representatives was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.*

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: I now recognize the Clerk to call the roll for the nomination offered.

*The Clerk called the roll for the nomination of Representative Lorenzo Iglecias Deleon Guerrero to serve as the Vice Speaker for the House of Representatives with the following results:*

Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta	yes
Representative Roman C. Benavente	yes
Representative Ivan A. Blanco	yes
Representative Antonio SN. Borja	yes
Representative Joel C. Camacho	yes
Representative Luis John DLG. Castro	yes
Representative Lorenzo I. Deleon Guerrero	yes
Representative Joseph A. Flores	yes
Representative Joseph Lee Pan T. Guerrero	yes
Representative Jose I. Itibus	yes
Representative Richard T. Lizama	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	yes
Representative Janet U. Maratita	yes
Representative Edwin K. Propst	yes
Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan	yes
Representative John Paul P. Sablan	yes
Representative Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez	yes
Representative Ralph N. Yumul	yes
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao	yes

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, all 19 members present voted for Lorenzo Iglecias Deleon Guerrero to the Office of the Vice Speaker.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Clerk. With all 19 members voting for Representative Lorenzo Iglecias Deleon Guerrero is hereby duly elected for the Office of the Vice Speaker of the 21<sup>st</sup> House of Representatives. Congratulations, Representative Deleon Guerrero. Moving on with our agenda. Fellow colleagues, I will now entertain a motion for the election for the Office of Floor Leader. I recognize Representative Joel Camacho.

### **ELECTION OF THE FLOOR LEADER**

Representative Joel C. Camacho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege that I nominate Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan to the Office of the Floor Leader for the 21<sup>st</sup> House of Representatives. So move.

*The motion was seconded.*

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: A motion has been placed on the floor for Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan to the Office of the Floor Leader and has been seconded. Are there any other nominations? I recognize Representative Ralph Yumul.

Representative Ralph N. Yumul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move to close nomination.

*The motion was seconded.*

*There was no discussion and the motion to close nomination for the Office of Floor Leader for the House of Representatives was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.*

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: I will now recognize the Clerk to call the roll for the nomination offered.

*The Clerk called the roll for the nomination of Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan to serve as the Floor Leader for the House of Representatives with the following results:*

Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta	yes
Representative Roman C. Benavente	yes
Representative Ivan A. Blanco	yes
Representative Antonio SN. Borja	yes
Representative Joel C. Camacho	yes
Representative Luis John DLG. Castro	yes
Representative Lorenzo I. Deleon Guerrero	yes
Representative Joseph A. Flores	yes
Representative Joseph Lee Pan T. Guerrero	yes
Representative Jose I. Itibus	yes
Representative Richard T. Lizama	yes
Representative Donald M. Manglona	yes
Representative Janet U. Maratita	yes
Representative Edwin K. Propst	yes
Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan	yes
Representative John Paul P. Sablan	yes
Representative Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez	yes
Representative Ralph N. Yumul	yes
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao	yes



House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, all 19 members present voted for John Paul Palacios Sablan to the Office of the Floor Leader.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Clerk. With all members voting Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan is hereby duly elected for the Office of the Floor Leader of the 21<sup>st</sup> House of Representatives. May I ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to please assist the Floor Leader to his seat. Thank you. Congratulations, Representative Sablan.

### **NOTIFICATION TO THE GOVERNOR**

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: We move on down to our next Order of Business. The Notifications to the Senate and to the Governor. I would like to appoint Representatives Joel Camacho and Antonio Borja to inform the Senate and Representatives Luis John Deleon Guerrero Castro and Jose Ilo Itibus to inform the Governor that the 21<sup>st</sup> House of Representatives is duly organized and ready to conduct business and at this time, I call for a short recess.

*The House recessed at 10:43 a.m.*

*RECESS*

*The House reconvened at 11:03 a.m.*

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: We shall now reconvene our Organizational Session and at this time the House will receive the report on Notification to the Senate and to the Governor. Representative Camacho you are recognized.

Representative Joel C. Camacho: Mr. Speaker, the Senate has not yet convened but as soon as they convene we will notify them of our Organization.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Camacho. I now recognize Representative Luis John Deleon Guerrero Castro.

Representative Luis John DLG. Castro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker and members, Representative Itibus and I have notified the Governor that the 21<sup>st</sup> House of Representatives is duly organized and ready to conduct business and the notification was greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Castro.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: At this time, under communications, I now recognize the Clerk. Are there any other communications received?

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: There are none received, Mr. Speaker.



## STATEMENTS OF MEMBERS

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Clerk. As we await the Senate’s communications informing the House of its transaction, at this time I will open the floor to members who wishes to deliver their statements; however, when the Senate is ready to deliver their communication to the House, the Chair will inform the members and we will go back to Communications to receive the Senate. Furthermore, should you have a written statement please submit those to the Clerk to append in the journal. Are there any objections? If none. We proceed starting with the members to my right. Clerk, please.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Propst.

### **Representative Edwin K. Prost’s Statement**

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished honorable guests for joining us today and most especially our colleagues and all our constituents out there, we are most grateful to you. *Buenas yan saludu, tirow me faischow*, good morning. For every word that I missed pronounced, I owe \$20.00 to Representative Ralph Yumul so I hope it was all correct. For the sake of brevity, I will do my best to keep this short, but once again I am truly truly grateful and deeply honored to be here today with such fine people. It is truly a blessing and to have the confidence of our precinct of our community is something you can never ever take for granted. I will continue to put our people first, I will continue to speak out when things need to be discussed and I will continue to be a voice for our people. It is indeed an honor. I just want to say that the election was a contentious one, we’ve seen it but the election is over – this time to mend fences it is time to work together hand in hand and I know with this august body we will do so. With the leadership of our Speaker, with the leadership of this body we will and we can do great things together. As the Speaker has stated, there is no majority and minority with us we are all one body in our earlier meetings and I thank you Mr. Speaker for being so kind and eloquent. With this job, contrary to popular opinion it does come with great sacrifice. None of us are millionaires, not that I know of but if you are one, I’d like to take a loan from you. This job comes with also with a requirement of great humility. I ask that we continue to be the humble leaders that we are. That we continue to remember who we work for and we work for the people of the Commonwealth. Often, we are told that as leader, you know we are told not to change, but I believe that change is necessary. In change, we must evolve and we must do adapt and we must do our very best. So, there is change. In fact, I got a new haircut, thanks to Yutu. I haven’t had a haircut since then, so if anybody knows a new hairdresser. I do want to say a few words this has been a very difficult time because we have lost a dear colleague, a dear friend, a brother as Francisco Santos Dela Cruz. It is an honor to have him – his memory right next to us and it would have been a greater honor to have sat with him and work with him, but I do know that he’s watching over us. I do know that his spirit is in this very room and he will continue to watch over us. I ask that we follow his lead. Frank was a true statesman, he was a great listener and a very very humble guy. I really appreciate his conversations, I appreciate his talks and I really appreciate his detail, how detail oriented he was. If anybody was to read a bill through and through and find out any minor flaws it will be Frank and he always didn’t try to condemn a bill, he always try to look at ways to make it the very best it could be unless it was absolutely vitally necessary. To our dear colleague Frank, to Lisa and Divana and your family, we are forever grateful and we are always always here for you and we thank you and we are in mourning, but we

do celebrate his new life. To those who ran and you might have fallen short, please know that I will share this seat with you. To the people of precinct 1 and our community this seat belongs to you, I work for you, for everyone in this room and I will do all I can to be there for you whenever you need me. To my family, to my committee, to my friends, thank you for your sacrifices that you have made. I have two ladies right behind me, very powerful women, my wife Daisy and my mother in-law Vivian and if I go over five minutes, my mother in-law might *deska* my ears. Mom, how am I doing? Am I doing okay? Thank you again for this wonderful opportunity. I look forward to working with all of you and accomplishing great things together as one family. Mr. Speaker, honored guests, thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to you today. *Si Yu'us Ma'ase*.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Propst and congratulations to you and your family. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Castro.

### **Representative Luis John DLG. Castro's Statement**

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know we were talking about the issue of time in regards to giving these statements and you know during one of our sessions my colleagues were kind of taking a bet to see if I was going to have the longest speech here this morning, but I did try to make my statements here short and sweet so we can continue on with the rest of the day and we have a busy day today. *Hafa adai, tirow* and welcome to this Inaugural Session of the 21<sup>st</sup> Northern Marianas Commonwealth House of Representatives. It's very overwhelming sitting in this chair again. The last time I was here was a Speaker at the Youth Congress. It was twenty-years ago when I first took an Oath of Office to serve the community as a member of that body, I was only 16 at the time. I kept high in regard the office that I was about to enter. It was meant to be a learning experience to everybody that was elected from the schools and precincts. I learned a lot, personally I did. Twenty-years later and with deep humility, I return to this chamber only this time it's to serve you, the people of precinct 1, as a member of the House. It was a long and hard road to get here, but the sacrifices paid off and we find ourselves not at the end of the road, but at a new part of the journey. A journey which will be tough at times rough, but necessary to take for the needs and concerns of our constituents. The issues we will face are great, but not impossible to overcome. Work done may get praised and at most times criticized, but that work must be done. Especially, this most critical time of our history with the suffering of our people is painfully hard to recognize in the district. Three-months ago our precinct and our islands were ravished by the wind and rain of super typhoon Yutu. Our infrastructure crippled, homes damaged or destroyed and people still in need of assistance and care. We are still in the process of recovery and thank goodness it's moving pretty well. Even though the debris will be picked up and disposed of broken structures will be rebuild and infrastructure continuing to be restored and strengthen, the cuts and scars Yutu gave our district will take a long time to heal, but as an elected member of this august body it is something that I am committed to helping find ease to together with my colleagues around me. Despite the challenges this monster of a storm has brought before us, we must not forget the work needed to not just move the precinct but our entire Commonwealth forward. We must capitalize on the progress made and bring that progress to heights even greater and I look forward to working with each and every one of you here and around the chamber to improve the CNMI. I hold the confidence each of you had in me when you

elected me great to my constituents and it is something I will not take lightly. Service has been a big part of my life and for the next two-years it is something I pledge to give you, nothing more nothing less. True it is easier said than done, but as William Blake once said, “Great things are done when men and women and mountains meet.” I give credit to the people who walk with me to get here. To my better half Elaine and our family, thank you for being there most especially when the sacrifice and stress of running a campaign sometimes made this experience feel like a one-man band. You are my strength then, you’ll be my strength now. To my committee to elect, thank you for keeping me on track all the way to the finish line. Thank you for pushing those buttons that needed to be pushed so that way we could see this process through. I know they’re listening in my office, so to Gerry, Anching, Bill, Frankie and Valerie thank you for your work. To my running mates, couldn’t have picked a better group of people to walk the streets of our villages with. To the precinct 1 Club Chair and officers, thank you so much for the confidence you had in me as a candidate. The experience on the campaign trail is a memorable one and it has definitely enriched me. Thank you very much once again. I owe a great thanks to Governor Ralph Torres. Thank you for your confidence and my capabilities both as your employee and as a candidate and I look forward to working with you closely in this term. There were many who aren’t here with us today who inspired me and were inspirations in discerning this path and for me much thanks is deserved to each of them and I feel I need to recognize them today. To Governor Inos thank you for giving me the chance to witness decision making working under you and thank you for the wisdom you imparted. To Vice Speaker Jesus Pangelinan Mafnas whose name adorns this building, your dream went full circle four-years ago with the first Youth Senator who made it to the House and it hasn’t stopped moving. We hoped that we made you proud and together as alumni, Representative Manglona, we hope to continue things moving and thank you for giving us a blueprint to get us to this place. To my *nino*, the late Herman Q. Guerrero for the many stories about his passion to service and his commitment to integrity, I hope to carry that through in this position. To Speaker Oscar Rasa for your confidence in me and your willingness to impart your knowledge not just to myself but to all of us, the dreams you had for our Commonwealth at it’s infancy still resonate today. The special I want to recognize are our dear colleague Representative Francisco Santos Dela Cruz who I was looking eagerly forward to working with. Thank you for the generosity, both before I ever went into public office and as a candidate. To Lisa, Divana, Damien, Dana and Deveney, your father and your husband’s memory will forever be remembered by all of us. Lastly, I want to thank my parents for their never seizing love and life lessons. I truly wish you could be with me here, but please know what you thought me will help me in helping those who need it. Lastly, I thank the people of precinct 1, people I don’t call constituents, but friends and family. Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann once said, “I’m in public service because I believe it’s a noble calling. No other profession gets as much grief for public criticism, but no other profession is as fulfilling and rewarding.” and I feel the same likewise. I ran the work for you and I pledge that again with just one request. I ask you to do something that a colleague of mine once told his constituents two years ago and that is “be my boss” and as your servant I ask you again, be my boss and your employee I will be. We’ve raised our hands and said our oaths and just like those that came before us, I know colleagues we will give our all to give everybody what they ask of all of us in this legislature with us to expand on progress and act where action is needed and through commitment and collaboration for our community, we will cross those ridges, we will make those strides and we will leave our precincts and our islands better than when we found it. *Un dānkolo na Si Yu’us Ma’ase, olomwaay* and good morning.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Castro and congratulations. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Maratita.

**Representative Janet U. Maratita’s Statement**

Thank you Clerk and thank you Speaker. *Buenas yan saludu, kon respetu para todus ni man presente guini espesiatmente para ayu siha man ginefle-hu ni man ékungok guenao huyong gi television. Kon respetu yan saludu para hamyo.* Good morning and welcome to all our distinguish guests, my fellow colleagues, families and friends and most especially to the people who have allowed all of us the opportunity and honor to gather with this esteemed chamber today. The people of our great Commonwealth, I want to extend my sincerest and most heartfelt sentiments of appreciation to the people of precinct 1, my children, my siblings, my family and the committee to re-elect me back as your Representative in the 21<sup>st</sup> Legislature. Thank you for entrusting me once again to be your voice in this legislative decision-making process that affect your children and the home, we all share. I have never taken this trust lightly and I promise to continue to listen to you above the things you care about to work with diligence to protect your interest and to represent you fervently with commitment, integrity and compassion. For those of you who are not aware, this will be my fifth term in office and while it still shocks me to admit it, I have officially reached a status I now share with my dear friends and colleagues, Congressman Edmund Villagomez, Lee Pan and the late Congressman Frank Dela Cruz and that is the status of senior legislators. I bring this fact up because although I am excited and in full support our next generations, participations in careers of public service it is worth mentioning that there has been a very slow-moving chains in the amount of representation that exist for women in public office here in the CNMI and I am very honored to have two women representatives to work for you in this chamber. Representative Tina Sablan, my former colleague and now my colleague again Representative Sheila Babauta. I will be remiss if I don’t recognize my colleague in the 20<sup>th</sup> Legislature, the Honorable Representative Alice Igitol whom I’m so proud of her for being a rookie in this chamber, but she managed to have at least five bills enacted into law. So, you see the place of the women is in the House of Representative. For these reasons, I would also like to take this opportunity and girls who are listening today, may you never forget that no one will represent your interest better than you can. May you never become too discouraged to grow too tired to continue to reach for that glass ceiling and lastly, may we as women continue to support, encourage and empower one another to succeed in public office and in all fields because when one of us succeeds, we all succeed. I would like to end my speech with a quote by justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, “I ask no favor for my sex. All I ask of our brethren is that they take their feet off our necks.” Thank you, *sen dánkolo na Si Yu’us Ma’ase, olomwaay man ginefle-hu taotao Marianas espesiatmente i taotao-hu gi precinct 1. Si Yu’us Ma’ase.*

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Rep. Maratita and congratulations.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Camacho.

**Representative Joel C. Camacho’s Statement**

Thank you, Clerk. Thank you, Speaker. Good morning and I would like to thank everybody who was able to make it here to witness this monumental event today. I would first like to take this opportunity to thank the Legislative Bureau, my supporters for not only believing in me, but also for their unwavering commitment and tireless efforts. This election is a difficult one and without the resiliency of families and friends, none of this would have been possible most especially my parents, my siblings and my other-half Monica and my two children Isaiah and Isaac. To my parents: mom, thank you for always having my back and putting up with all the difficulties during this election. Your strength and guidance will be a keystone in helping me to shape my decisions and to shape our islands. Dad, thank you for inspiring me with your humility, you are truly the most humble person I know. Your work ethic is a true testament and an inspiration in my life and I will continue to aspire to be like you to serve our people. To the people of precinct 4, I am forever grateful for your confidence in me to serve our precinct with our Congresswoman Babauta. Our CNMI, you elected us to work for you and I promise to work hard. Once again, thank you. *Un dánkolo na Si Yu'us Ma'ase, ghillisow.* Thank you.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Rep. Camacho and congratulations. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Manglona.

### **Representative Donald M. Manglona's Statement**

Good morning Mr. Speaker, colleagues, distinguished guests, friends, family and our dear people of the Commonwealth. I would like to take this time to thank many who have influenced or who have been an influence in my life, those who have been with me through this journey and the people who have entrusted me to represent precinct 7. I want to start off by thanking the good Lord up above for all His blessings and guidance throughout my life. With You all things are possible. I pray for Your continued guidance and wisdom as I venture onto this role I am now under. To my parents Charles and Lorna Manglona, I may not have said enough, but thank you and I love you. My siblings and I have been blessed by your unconditional love and support and for that I am forever grateful. To my siblings Mark, Craig, Oliver and Charlene along with your families, thank you for sticking with me through it all. You all put your life on hold to support and guide me through my campaign. I don't where I would be without you guys. To my family and friends, thank you to those who flew in to be here and for those that are tuning in your untiring support and encouragement has allowed me to tackle life's challenges with courage and confidence. Your advices and wisdom you've bestowed upon me is something I cherish and I will forever be grateful for it. To my campaign committee, my Chairman Paterno Jose Hocog, Chanelle, Bernie, Daisy, Julie and many others – this was a journey I could have imagined going any other way. You sacrificed so much for me and stood by my side throughout. We've been through many challenges and have overcome them and with these added duties on top of your daily jobs in order to give me this opportunity to represent our people, you are and will forever be family. To my hardworking, motivated and dedicated former colleagues, these last eight-years have taught me a lot and prepared me for this journey. Our students have always been our main priority and now given this platform, I continue to work with and for you and for them. I would also like to thank the students and parents I've worked with you have taught me many valuable lessons, you have taught me compassion, dedication and determination. I may not have kids of my own, but you have allowed me to be a parent, a mentor and a friend. I am beyond blessed to

be a part of your lives. Lastly and certainly not the least, to my constituents from Rota and abroad from the bottom of my heart thank you. You have all given me your trust and support and I promise to do my very best to represent you. I hear you, I see you and I feel you. Colleagues, once again congratulations to each of you. I may not know many of you personally, but just know that I am deeply honored to work along side you for the great people of this Commonwealth. And to quote former President Barrack Obama, “Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.” So in closing, thank you to the LB Director and staff who have made this ceremony possible and to all of you who are here today or are tuning in. Thank you.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Manglona and congratulations. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Blanco.

Representative Ivan A. Blanco: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. I am happy to submit my statement to the Clerk for the inclusion in the journal. Thank you.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Blanco and Congratulations. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Villagomez.

#### **Representative Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez’s Statement**

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and good morning. Just like Representative Blanco, I want to keep it short and sweet. Two words, thank you to every one whose made this possible for all of us and myself included, family, friends and most especially the people of precinct 3. I stand ready to serve and I’ve always been ready to serve. Thank you for the opportunity, to my colleagues congratulations and uncle Frank may you rest in peace and continue to watch over us. Thank you.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Rep. Villagomez and congratulations. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Itibus.

#### **Representative Jose I. Itibus’s Statement**

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Clerk. Welcome friends and distinguished guests. On behalf of my wife, our children and our families, I would like to extend a heartfelt, *un dánkolo na Si Yu’us Ma’ase* and *ghillisow* to my beloved brothers and sisters of this beautiful Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. Today marks my second term as a Congressman to this 21<sup>st</sup> House of Representatives. I am proud and honored to have another opportunity to serve our people and I thank you my friends of precinct 3 for continuing to put your confidence in my duty to serve you. Thank you for your support it is not an easy fit, fortunately I am surrounded by loving families and friends who without I would not be in this position. There is so much for us to do as legislatures to ensure that the promises made to the people are delivered most especially

to those who are still affected by the destruction of typhoon Yutu. I'm asking my colleagues that as we embark on another term together, we put aside politics and differences and put our energy together and help our people, there is so much to be done. Lastly, *Kumaire* Liz, I want to thank you and Frank for bringing us into your lives. Frank gave me my first real role in politics. Needless to say, he played a big hand why I am here today. He was a great mentor as all of my colleagues over here knows how close we are and even a greater friend, our relationship wasn't just found in politics it extends beyond these doors and into our homes. Over the last thirteen-years, we've not only become friends, we are family. My wife and my children, I thank you for this gift of family. *Pare* Frank, *adios*. I can still feel that you're here. *Adios* until we meet again. Thank you.

Speaker Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Itibus and congratulations. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative John Paul Sablan.

### ***Representative John Paul P. Sablan's Statement***

Thank you, Clerk and thank you Mr. Speaker. *Hafa adai* and *tirou* and good afternoon to all distinguished guests, family and friends, ladies and gentlemen. First off, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you all my fellow colleagues and members of this 21<sup>st</sup> Legislature and also extend my deepest gratitude for your trust to be your Floor Leader. I will continue to commit myself to work intently with you all, my fellow colleagues, with the Senate, business community, government agencies and the new administration. I pledge to uphold as election district 2 representative serve for the people of the precinct 2 as well as the Commonwealth as a whole. I will continue to tend to my constituents' opinions and needs to further enhance and betterment for our community and the Commonwealth. I also want to take this opportunity to extend my sincere and condolences to Lisa and the kids. I will forever treasure the memories I have with our colleague the late Frank Dela Cruz as a colleague and as a close relative. On behalf of my wife Monette, children and family, I would like to express and extend our sincere appreciation and *un dánkolo na Si Yu'us Ma'ase*. Once again to the wonderful supporters of precinct 2 for your vote of confidence and believing in me to serve you as a representative in the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislature, 19<sup>th</sup>, the 20<sup>th</sup> and now the 21<sup>st</sup> it has been indeed a great honor and extraordinary privilege to serve you all. To my committee to re-elect members, the hardworking Chairman Jose C. Reyes for continuing to commit and experience this glorious past years and years ahead with me and my family. With that Mr. Speaker, I stand ready to work with you all and I yield my time to the next member.

Speaker Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao: Thank you, Floor Leader and congratulations. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Guerrero.

### ***Representative Joseph Lee Pan T. Guerrero's Statement***

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to submit my speech to the Clerk to be part of the journal, but before I do that Mr. Speaker – to my Chairman Frank Dela Cruz you are a true



statement. You have enlightened my vision here for this legislature even for a short period of time, but you are a true statement for that I know that you're here among ourselves. Last but not least, Mr. Speaker *un dánkolo na Si Yu'us Ma'ase* for the people of our respective precinct for entrusting their vote of confidence to all of us here. I look to my right and I want to give them the opportunity because other than Representative Deleon Guerrero everybody here are brand new. I want to give them the opportunity, I want to hear what they have to say. With that thank you.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Lee Pan Guerrero for your consideration and congratulations again. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Christina Sablan.

### **Representative Christina Marie E. Sablan's Statement**

Thank you. Mr. Speaker and members, honored guests, friends, family, parents, fellow citizens good morning. The first day of a new legislature is always hopeful and that's a beautiful thing because all great work, all great movements for meaningful and positive change begin with home. Today, I would like to take these next few minutes to share my hopes for this 21<sup>st</sup> House of Representatives. First, I hope that we the members of this body will always hold the people we serve, the people who put us here in the highest regard that we will be transparent about our plans and actions, hold public hearings, find creative ways to engage with our constituents and listen. That we will put the public interest first above any special interest and be guided in our work by the highest ethical and moral standards and that we will think and act with the future in mind inspired by vision of a safer, healthier, more beautiful and a sustainable Marianas. Second, I hope that we will always treat each other with respect as professionals regardless of our political affiliations and no matter how much we may disagree on matters of policy. Few leaders exemplify this grace as well as our late and deeply missed colleague Frank Dela Cruz. If we all strive to follow his model of kindness, candor, sincerity and humility – taking disagreements in stride and acting always according to conscience, I think we'll be in good shape. Heck, we might even all be friends. And on that note, my third hope is that we would seek opportunities to collaborate with each other in bipartisan and productive ways and constantly challenge each other to improve our work always to the benefit of the people we serve. I know we can find common ground in areas that are critical to the well-being of our people. Like disaster recovery to rebuild our homes schools, businesses and villages across all our islands so that we are stronger against future storms. Like healthcare to expand access to the thousands of uninsured and underinsured residence and provide our Commonwealth Healthcare system with the resources it needs to deliver quality services. Like strengthening our working families and businesses to make sure that all may reap the benefits of economic prosperity like taking care of our retirees, our students, our teachers, our veterans and military families. I look around this chamber and I see a diverse and talented group of people. Each of us brings gifts to this table. We have experienced educators and researchers. We have members from business and financial backgrounds. We have veterans of our armed forces, community organizers, cultural practitioners, law enforcement, health and environmental advocates. We have seasoned public servants and fresh faces who bring new energy and new ideas. We all love our Marianas and we all ran to make a positive difference in our community. I think that if we each make an effort to treat our constituents and each other with respect and to reach across party lines to work effectively together, we can and will accomplish so much to uplift and empower the people we serve and we will show by our actions

that we our servant leaders that they can trust. So, let's be hopeful today and everyday and let's translate that hope into action to build a Marianas that we can be proud of and honor the memory of our dear Frank and others who went before us who wanted a better life for all. Thank you and may God bless our Northern Mariana Islands.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Sablan and congratulations. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Yumul.

Representative Ralph N. Yumul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like other colleagues, I'm going to submit my official statement, but first and foremost I would like to thank everyone who's here today to pretty much experience this event. To the people of precinct 3, thank you for allowing me to serve again, although I'm not brand-new I'm actually considered used in the car term. I was brand-new at one point, but then I was able to come back. With that I would like to yield the rest of the time I'm sure there's other new members here that would like to speak and have this opportunity to say the first words to their constituents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Yumul and congratulations. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Flores.

### **Representative Joseph A. Flores's Statement**

Thank you, Clerk. Mr. Speaker, colleagues, guests and especially to my constituents precinct 1, I would like to *malago' yo' para bai chule este na opottunidat para bai na'i dánkolo na agradecimiento pues bai na'i bente iyo-ku* precinct 1 *ni ma na'i yo' gi konfinansa niha gi ma iniyo gi un i taotao-ña gi gos matte ni guahu gi puyedu-hu Flores. Ni ti manamalayo i flores na sakkan na mana man flores para este na* 21 Legislature. In hope of this terms, I can bring you energy and ideas in problem solving straight to congress we focus on advancing policy, support equality opportunity and security to make a new start and move forward to meet every challenges we face in the CNMI. Again, make it short thank you Mr. Speaker and God bless us all.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Flores and congratulations. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Borja.

### **Representative Antonio SN. Borja's Statement**

Thank you, Clerk. Also thank you, Mr. Speaker, *Pale* Ogumoro, honored guests, my colleagues, fellow workers in the government, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for being here today especially to those who traveled from the islands of Tinian and Rota to witness the inauguration of your public servant. With deep humility, my family and I would like to offer our sincerest gratitude to the people of Tinian for their overwhelming support they gave me to represent them as their representative. As your public servant, I will stand for the ultimate interest of the people

of Tinian and the entire Commonwealth. I will support legislations and programs that will better the life of everyone. I ask my colleagues to offer each other our hands of friendship and comraderies to work collectively, dedicate ourselves to find solution for our islands needs. Our people cannot expect us to solve our problems, but they can expect us to do our very best. *Enao ha, un dánkolo na Si Yu'us Ma'ase*, thank you. May God bless the legislature.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Borja and congratulations. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Lizama.

**Representative Richard T. Lizama's Statement**

Good morning. Thank you everyone it was a wonderful ceremony today. I want to thank my wife, my daughter in the back, I want to thank all my supporters from precinct 5 for allowing me to come and work here at the House for the people of precinct 5. Mr. Speaker, it is a tremendous honor to be a member of the 21<sup>st</sup> Legislature. With all of you here today as a member of the 21<sup>st</sup> Legislature I vow to focus my effort in working with all of you. We are not divided by party, we are unified by our desire to work for our own people of the Commonwealth. Thank you, *Si Yu'us Ma'ase*.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Rep. Lizama. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Benavente.

**Representative Roman C. Benavente's Statement**

*Si Yu'us Ma'ase*, Clerk and Speaker. *Ya hu bai sangani taiguini na hu na'na'i – dánkolo na agradesimiento ya dispensa yo' ya bai usa i lengguahi-ta – na'na'i dánkolo na agradesimiento todú i taotao ni man matto magi ya ma selebra este na okasi6n. Este na okasi6n espisiát para todú giya hita kontodu siha sa hafa lina'la'-ta este para mo'na para futura-ta para i famagu'on-ta yan todú i hafa ta cho'cho'gue guini inafe'fekta i lina'la' taotao. Pues eyugue na ya hu na bai sotso todú du ni man ga'chong-hu ni man gaige guini. Bai sotyo hamyo ya ta fan a'go'te kanai taimano ha sangán si Tina. We might be differences in many different area, but let's pull together. Let's be collective – maila ta fan dana ta fan ayuda para minauleg i futirata para i minauleg taotao-ta para i minauleg famagu'on-ta sa guaha hinenggek-hu giya guahu pisunatmente. I espehos ni un attan hao guaha ni hago ti yamu lao i hafa un cho'chogue yan hafa un pratiktika eyugue i risuta ginen i publiku mu na annok mo'na gi karera-mu. Pues enao ha Mr. Speaker. Dánkolo na Si Yu'us Ma'ase para todus hamyo. Thank you again.*

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Benavente and congratulations. Clerk, please continue.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Babauta.

**Representative Sheila Therese J. Babauta's Statement**

Thank you, Clerk. Thank you, Speaker. *Hafa adai* and thank you for sharing this special day with us. To the family of the late Congressman Frank Dela Cruz may you all find peace and comfort knowing that he is with our good Lord. As a local girl born and raised here on Saipan, I was taught at a very young age to support what I believe in and follow through with action and intention and that's why I'm so grateful for everyone who supported me, everyone who believed in me my wonderful parents Diego Reyes Babauta and Dolorina Weilbacher Jack Babauta, my dedicated Chairwoman Susan Riva Babauta and her family John Quitugua Babauta and their daughters Nancy and Jessica, to my committee Max, Angel, Malia and Kylie, my loving siblings Carmen, Justin, Tracy, Christine and my nieces Hayden and Tiana I love you. Mikiotti, I love you. Everyone who contributed to our campaign committed time, effort, energy those who spoke words of wisdom and love and those who whispered words of encouragement, thank you all so much I am so grateful. My very first election was in the fourth grade, I ran for stucco secretary. I am not entirely sure where I mustered the courage to do so, but I did it anyway and I had the support of my family – my sister even wrote my speech for me – but she didn't write this one, I promise. I did not win that election and I was devastated, but fast-forward 20 years later I decided to participate in a different election and the results were different. We made history in precinct 4 for the first time ever we hit one thousand votes. I take that statement very seriously and I am grateful. I hear you loud and clear precinct 4, I love the CNMI too – this is my home too. Now the road to the CNMI we all envision is long it's going to be challenging and it will take time. Growth takes time, but I invite you all to join us, join us on this adventure, join us on this journey, this journey of respect, integrity, service and empowerment so that we can continue to cultivate people – people who are strong, resilient, faithful and loving and with our world growing smaller with the advancing technology we are going to be able to spread that *hafa adai* spirit around the globe. So, let's do our part, let's take responsibility, let's contribute to our communities and let's work towards a better CNMI together. Thank you.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Babauta. Congratulations. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Representative Deleon Guerrero.

### ***Representative Lorenzo I. Deleon Guerrero's Statement***

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also will submit my written statement to the Clerk to append to the journal, but allow me to just read one very sentence in my statement and that is we must work in spirit and in harmony and together, we can strive in a unified and common goal, for the betterment of our great Commonwealth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Vice Speaker and congratulations. Clerk, please proceed.

House Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: I told you guys it was going to go fast. We were debating about allowing all the members to say a few words and they kept telling me “no, you should do it on behalf of everybody” but I honestly believe that this is the opportunity for every member to show their gratitude and appreciation to the people that supported them and worked for them. So

for that I thank you guys for taking the time on making a speech. *Hafa adai* and *tirow*. *Pale Sid Si Yu'us Ma'ase na ga'gaige hao guini todú otro siha man malago esta*. There's a lot of events today so a lot of the dignitaries have made their ways, but also to our Honorable Mayor June Blas from Barrigada thank you for staying with us, I appreciate that.

**Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao’s Statement**

Ladies and gentlemen and members of the viewing public, *hafa adai* and welcome to the Inauguration of the 21<sup>st</sup> CNMI House of Representatives. My name is Blas Jonathan Tenorio Attao, and I am better known as “B.J.” I am both humbled and proud to speak to you all today as an elected-member of the House, and through the confidence of the people in my precinct, as well as the confidence of my elected-colleagues, it is my profound honor to also be delivering this address as Speaker of the 21<sup>st</sup> CNMI Legislature. Before I begin, please join me in a brief moment of silence in honor of our dear colleague, Representative Francisco Santos Dela Cruz of precinct 3, who suddenly passed on January 6, 2019. Thank you, and please allow me to share a few words about Representative Dela Cruz, who I fondly knew as “Frank.” Frank served in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Legislatures while I was still working as a legislative staff member; and in the 20<sup>th</sup> legislature as my esteemed colleague; and was recently reelected into this 21<sup>st</sup> Legislature as a representative of precinct 3. Frank was a committed public servant and a fierce advocate for precinct 3 and the CNMI. He has always been an inspiration to me as a junior precinct 3 representative. I owe him so much, and I will not be here before you today if it were not for Frank. During the precinct 3 deliberations about leadership, as a more senior member of the House and a former Vice Speaker, it was Frank who gave up his aspirations to become Speaker to support me, and his support did not go unnoticed. For that, I extend my deepest gratitude and appreciation to Frank, as well as my heartfelt condolences to his wife Lisa and to his family. Thank you guys for allowing him to be a part of the Commonwealth. Thank you for sharing him with everybody else. Thank you. We are all here today a mere two-and-a-half months after Super Typhoon Yutu brought chaos and catastrophe to our island community. From the ravaging winds that damaged our homes to the long lines for drinking water after a hard day’s work picking up the scattered pieces of our lives, Super Typhoon Yutu was a storm for the history books. In its wake, Super Typhoon Yutu left more than just tin in our yards and despair in our hearts. Yutu left us all a little bit stronger, a little bit faster, and a bit readier to make a positive impact. Inspired by the community, I would like to use three characteristics as the basis for my remarks: strength, speed, and impact. Beginning with strength, the day after Typhoon Yutu I took a drive through the devastation and I saw a man standing in what I thought to be a vacant lot filled with debris. I drove towards him and offered him a ride which he declined. The same thing happened the next day and the day after. So on the third day, when I asked him, “Why? Why don’t you want to leave?” He looked at me with complete sincerity and said: “This has to be a dream. I will wake up from this soon.” My heart sank for this man, but my brain told me that I had to be strong, and that meant I had to help him wake up from this bad dream. I had to wake him up to the harsh reality of Yutu’s wake so that he could begin his recovery process and rebuild his home. To truly care for that man, I had to be the bearer of bad news that day, and it nearly broke my heart. Amidst the devastation, I finally gathered the strength to tell him that he wasn’t dreaming, and I stood by him until he collected himself. I drove away from this man with a heavy heart, but I knew I did the right thing. And that is what I mean about being strong. We must be able to make the tough calls as we will likely face difficult and unpopular decisions in the next few years. As leaders, in the spirit of caring for our people, we need to strengthen them so that they can move

forward. We need to give them the tools they need to succeed. We need to create policies that will help everyone, not just a select few. Most importantly, we need to listen. We may or may not be praised for the tough decisions that we will have to make. There is only one guarantee, and that is we will face criticism as we cannot make everyone happy. It is during these tough times of criticism where we must all dig deep for the strength to make the tough calls to improve our Commonwealth for everyone. Next, I'd like to talk about speed. Yutu developed into the strongest typhoon that ever-hit U.S. soil practically overnight. In the same way, the work in the villages by our public servants, regardless of their party affiliation, as well as private entities, and our own citizens showed that we can all band together and work quickly for the common good of our community. My fellow members, it is our turn to do our part. In this House, and in terms of speed, I would like to begin today. Just as quickly as Yutu developed from a depression to the most powerful storm we've ever seen, I want to use my office as the Speaker to bring together all members of the House just as quickly. Though we all share our differences across party lines, we have at least one thing in common – the willingness to serve our people. I believe that by working together, we can effectively address our community's needs and through diligence and hard work – perhaps – we may also reach its wants. Let us all be servant leaders. Lastly, after strength and speed, I'd like to address impact. The job that Governor Torres and his administration has done, and continues to do to lead us to recovery has been phenomenal. He and the members of his cabinet worked hard to mitigate the damage caused by Super Typhoon Yutu. However, as members, we need to come to terms with the inevitable truth of the CNMI's situation, the truth of our economy and our infrastructure, the truth about Yutu's wake and how it affected us all. Importantly, we need to face the truth that Yutu has brought to light – our economy is not diverse enough. We also need to appreciate that we live in an area of the world where typhoons are a part of our lives. In the past three years, we have suffered from Soudelor, Mangkhut, and Yutu. We can't pretend that typhoons are a rare occurrence anymore. We must improve our infrastructure. At this point, while I am on the topic of typhoons and infrastructure, I would like to thank the crews from Palau, Colorado, the FSM, our brothers and sisters from Guam, and of course our men and women at CUC, for all the work they did to get power and water back into our homes. I'd also like to thank all the local agencies for working with the US Military to distribute thousands of gallons of drinkable water from the Reverse Osmosis systems that they set up in the weeks after Yutu. All of your hard work is greatly appreciated. I'd also like to recognize Meena Benavente, who we recently honored in a legislative resolution for her inspirational artwork in which she displayed creative messages of hope and encouragement around the island on pieces of used tin. Coming back to my point about improving our infrastructure, I realize that a substantially better power and water system will be costly. Many will ask if we can afford to make our infrastructure stronger. I say that if we're honest, we cannot afford not to improve it. One way or another, I would like to address our level of preparedness for the storms of the future during the relative calmness of today. With that said, as we consider the budget for FY 2019, we must all consider the effects of Super Typhoon Yutu and the storms that will come. This is where diversifying our economy comes in to play. As we all know, our economy relies heavily on the tourism industry. The job that the Marianas Visitors Authority does to improve the CNMI on a shoe string budget is outstanding but we can all agree that we need to do more by looking into other sustainable industries and revenue sources. Our CNMI budget and our debt service, how we finance our retiree pensions and supplement our CHCC, PSS, and NMC budgets, all of it – are all far too reliant on tourism and its related industries. Let's develop new industries. Let's explore viable sources of new revenue. Let's find ways for us to truly develop a local workforce to decrease our reliance on foreign labor. Let's explore more

reasonable and practical ways to diversify our economy. It will not be an easy road, but as the late President George H.W. Bush once said, “No problem of human making is too great to overcome by human ingenuity, human energy, and the untiring hope of the human spirit.” Importantly, no problem is too great for the untiring hope for our Commonwealth. Let’s continue to dream of what our future can and should be by continuing and supporting the work that is being done by NMTI Latte Academy, and all the folks that are working to train our people. We also need to help NMC get back on track. Before it can help train the workforce of tomorrow it needs to build its campus for the students of today. That’s the type of impact I would like to have in the next couple of years. We have a lot of work ahead of us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Legislature if we are to develop ways of improving the next generations’ livelihood and give them more opportunities. As I conclude, I would like to take a few moments to express my heartfelt appreciation to everyone here. I will not try to thank everyone by name because frankly there are too many people, family and friends, colleagues and mentors, to whom I owe so much and to whom I am truly grateful. To all of you, I will not forget your tireless work and unending support. I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to the members for their votes for speakership. Thank you to the people of precinct 3, both those that did and those that did not vote for me – I now represent you too, and I will strive to earn your trust as your public servant. As we start this 21<sup>st</sup> Legislature, I would be remiss if I did not thank the members of the House and the Senate from the 1<sup>st</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> CNMI Legislatures and the founding fathers and mothers of our Commonwealth. To my committee to re-elect, my Chairman Simion Lisua, our precinct club Chairman Jack Ogumoro, to my parents and the rest of my friends and families, thank you. To my dad, please know that as I sit here as Speaker of the House, and I look down across the chamber to the Floor Leader’s seat, I will always be reminded that the reason that I am sitting up here today, holding this gavel is because when it comes to public service, you taught me everything I know. Lastly, I want to thank my better-half, Jeannie for her unconditional love and support. Thank you for understanding that all the time and effort I put into my work is so that children, like our daughter Breyia, can grow up in a safer and better CNMI. My dear colleagues, you can count on the fact that I will not ask for your support nor demand your cooperation. Instead, I promise to earn it. By working together, I know we can take care of our community’s needs but the goal is to get to the wants. With all the experience and knowledge in this chamber, we can definitely get to that point. Let us all strive to make a positive impact in the lives of everyone in the CNMI because our success here will be their success in our community. Many of you may not know, but Yutu hit the CNMI on my birthday, and with all the damage and destruction that happened that night, I never got to celebrate my birthday publicly so, while I have the floor, if you will permit me one belated birthday wish: I wish that the 21<sup>st</sup> CNMI House of Representatives will be as resilient as the people of our Commonwealth after Super Typhoon Yutu, and that we will all be a little stronger, unite a little quicker, and be readier to instill a positive impact in our community. *Si Yu’us Ma’ase, ghillisow* and thank you.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, members. At this time, the Senate is ready to officially inform the House.

*Communication was received from the Senate informing the House that the Senate is duly organized and ready to conduct business.*

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: We now proceed on to continue with the – we’re done. Sorry we will proceed to the next Order of Business. Clerk under Announcement.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

*The Clerk announced that there are no announcements received.*

## NOTIFICATION TO THE SENATE

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Can we take a three-minute recess for Rep. Joel Camacho and Rep. Antonio Borja to please notify the Senate that we are duly organized and ready to conduct business. Thank you, members. I respectfully ask to please remain in the chamber. Thank you.

*The House recessed at 12:13 p.m.*

## RECESS

*The House reconvened at 12:22 p.m.*

Representative Joel C. Camacho: Mr. Speaker and members, Representative Borja and I notified the Senate that the House is duly organized and ready to conduct business.

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Representative Camacho. Thank for that and as you know earlier the Senate notified the House that they’re duly organized and ready to conduct business. Announcements, Clerk.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

*The Clerk announced that there are no announcements received.*

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Clerk. We move on to the next item, House committees and committee chairs. The Chair will inform the members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Rules and the House committee chairs at a later date. Thank you.

## ADJOURNMENT

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Next order of business, I would like to ask the Floor Leader for the motion to adjourn.

Floor Leader John Paul P. Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move to adjourn subject to the Call of the Chair. So move.

*The motion was seconded.*

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: The motion is made and seconded. Are there any discussions?

*Several members voiced “ready.”*

*There was no discussion and the motion to adjourn was carried by voice vote. There was no nay vote.*

*The House adjourned at 12:23 p.m.*

Speaker Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: I would like to remind my colleagues that immediately after we will have our official group photo up here at the dais. Again, *Si Yu’us Ma’ase yan ghillisow*. I now recognize the Master of Ceremony Mr. Taitano.

*Master of Ceremony Jovano Q. Taitano*: Thank you, Speaker Attao. Please all rise. At this time, I ask Father Isidro to deliver the Benediction.

## **BENEDICTION**

*(Father Isidro Ogumoro gave the Benediction)*

*Master of Ceremony Jovano Q. Taitano*: Thank you Father Isidro. Ladies and gentlemen, honorable guests, this concludes our Inaugural Ceremony for the 21<sup>st</sup> Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature. On behalf of the members of the House of Representatives and the Director of the Legislative Bureau, *Si Yu’us Ma’ase, ghillisow* and thank you for joining us witness this memorable and historical event. The members of the 21<sup>st</sup> Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature and the Legislative Bureau invite you to join us for lunch on the legislature’s lawn immediately adjacent to our location. At this time, I ask all members to proceed to the dais to take the official photo of the House of Representatives of the 21<sup>st</sup> Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Venetia S. Rosario  
House Journal Clerk

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## **APPEARANCE OF LOCAL BILLS**

**FIRST LEGISLATIVE DAY:** 1<sup>st</sup> Legislative appearance of a local bill is on the day it is introduced.

**SECOND LEGISLATIVE DAY:** NONE

**THIRD LEGISLATIVE DAY:** NONE