



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TWENTY-THIRD NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

REGULAR SESSION, 2023

LEGISLATIVE JOURNAL

5th Day, First Regular Session

Monday, March 13, 2023

The House of Representatives of the Twenty-Third Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature convened its Fifth Day, First Regular Session on Monday, March 13, 2023 at 2:06 p.m., in the House Chamber on Capitol Hill, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

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

A moment of silence was observed.

ROLL CALL

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

The Chair directed the members to item IV, Introduction of Bills and recognized Representative Roman C. Benavente.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

ADOPTION OF JOURNALS

None

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

House Bills:

Representative Roman C. Benavente officially introduced the following bill:

H. B. NO. 23-30

To impose an additional five percent (5%) on any licensed construction contractor that earns a yearly gross revenue of Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$250,000.00) or more for a period of three years.

REP. ROMAN C. BENAVENTE of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Representatives Angelo A. Camacho, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Marissa R. Flores, Julie M. A. Ogo, John Paul P. Sablan, Edmund S. Villagomez, and Ralph N. Yumul)
(REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND TOURISM)

Representative Roman C. Benavente: Mr. Speaker, this is a sunset provision. It has a terminating effect. So just for the record, thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Okay, thank you Representative Roman Benavente and House Bill 23-30 will be referred to the Committee on Commerce and Tourism.

House Local Bills: None

House Legislative Initiatives: None

The Chair directed the members to item V, Introduction of Resolutions and recognized Representative Ralph N. Yumul.

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

House Resolutions: None

House Joint Resolutions: None

House Commemorative Resolutions: None

House Concurrent Resolutions:

Representative Ralph N. Yumul officially introduced the following resolution:

H. C. R. NO. 23-1

To approve revenues and resources of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, as identified pursuant to Article III, Section 9(a) of the Constitution, as amended, and 1 CMC, Division 7, for Fiscal Year 2023, effective upon the passage of this resolution, and ending on September 30, 2023 to reflect proposed revisions to the FY 2023 Annual Appropriations Act enacted as Public Law 22-22.

REP. RALPH N. YUMUL of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for himself*, Representatives Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Angelo A. Camacho, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Thomas J. DIC. Manglona, John Paul P. Sablan, and Edmund S. Villagomez)

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Chairman Yumul. With no objection, House Concurrent Resolution 23-1 will be placed on the Resolution Calendar today for action.

Several members voiced “no objection.”

The Chair directed the members to item VII, Senate Communication and recognized the Clerk.

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

None

SENATE COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk announced the following Senate Communications:

SEN. COMM. 23-4: (3/9/2023) Returning H. B. No. 23-1, entitled, “*To amend 7 CMC §4101 to lower the interest rate of civil money judgments from nine percent (9%) to three percent (3%).*”, which was passed by the Senate without amendments on March 9, 2023. [*For info-Will go to Governor*]

SEN. COMM. 23-5: (3/9/2023) Returning H. B. No. 23-6, entitled, “*To amend 4 CMC § 8112 to prioritize net metering to include public libraries; and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate without amendments on March 9, 2023. [*For info-Will go to Governor*]

SEN. COMM. 23-6: (3/9/2023) Returning H. B. No. 23-10, HD1, entitled, “*To amend 8 CMC §1204, as amended by Public Law 22-25, to create an exemption to the requirement that a marriage certificate include the “places of residence”.*”, which was passed by the Senate without amendments on March 9, 2023. [*For info-Will go to Governor*]

SEN. COMM. 23-7: (3/9/2023) Transmitting for House action S. B. NO. 23-09, entitled, “*To repeal and reenact 1 CMC § 2502 to clarify the rank and file at the Department of Public Safety; and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate on March 9, 2023. [***For action***]

SEN. COMM. 23-8: (3/9/2023) Transmitting for House action S. J. R. NO. 23-01, entitled, “*Requesting Governor Arnold I. Palacios to re-assess the exempt status of the CNMI in participating in the Disadvantaged Business Enterprises pertaining to the Department of Transportation Financial Assistance Programs.*”, which was adopted by the Senate on March 9, 2023. [***For action***]

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader made a motion to accept Senate Communications 23-4 to 23-8 so they may become property of the House.

The motion was seconded.

There was no discussion and the motion to accept Senate Communications 23-4 to 23-8 so they may become property of the House was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair referred the following Senate Communications accordingly:

- *Senate Communication 23-7 (S.B. 23-9) referred to the Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations*
- *Senate Communication 23-8 (S.J.R. 23-1) referred to the Committee on Federal and Foreign Affairs and Public Utilities, Transportation and Communications*

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: I urge the Chairpersons to please work together on this. Thank you.

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. 23-27: (3/6/2023) From Representative Marissa R. Flores informing the Speaker that she will be out of the Commonwealth on official business beginning March 19, 2023 and returning March 26, 2023 and request to be excused from any and all official functions during her absence. [*For info*]

HSE. COMM. 23-28: (3/7/2023) From Representative Angelo A. Camacho informing the Speaker that he will be out of the Commonwealth on official business beginning March 19, 2023 and returning March 26, 2023 and request to be excused from any and all official functions during his 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. 23-16: (3/8/2023) Certification of election of the incoming 19th CNMI Youth Congress. [*For info*]

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

Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And this is just to congratulate the newly elected youth senators and also to congratulate the candidates that ran for each of the respective seats. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

None

REPORTS OF SPECIAL AND CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

RESOLUTION CALENDAR

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

H. C. R. NO. 23-1

To approve revenues and resources of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, as identified pursuant to Article III, Section 9(a) of the Constitution, as amended, and 1 CMC, Division 7, for Fiscal Year 2023, effective upon the passage of this resolution, and ending on September 30, 2023 to reflect proposed revisions to the FY 2023 Annual Appropriations Act enacted as Public Law 22-22.

The motion was seconded.

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

Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank the chairman of Ways and Means for getting this concurrent resolution prepared for our action today. Just for informational purpose for the members, I actually spoke to the Senate President and they've done their analysis on the budget, but she thought that with the settlement fund payment was inclusive of the 25% that's obligated to our retirees. Unfortunately, those information are coming from the general appropriations. It's not an earmark. So, we do not have to change the concurrent resolution as written right now, at least the numbers that were submitted by the Administration until they come up with new numbers then we will be amending the numbers on the concurrent resolution. So, I just want to put that for the record that those monies that are potentially new monies for the actual budget will be reflective on the budget bill itself, but it will not change the ceiling of this current budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The Clerk called the roll on the motion for the passage of House Concurrent Resolution 23-1 with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	yes
Representative Vincent Raymond S. Aldan	yes

Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao	yes
Representative Roman C. Benavente	yes
Representative Angelo A. Camacho	yes
Representative Diego Vincent F. Camacho	yes
Representative Joel C. Camacho	yes
Representative Vicente C. Camacho	yes
Representative Manny Gregory T. Castro	yes
Representative Joseph A. Flores	yes
Representative Marissa R. Flores	yes
Representative Thomas John D.C. Manglona	yes
Representative Julie Marie A. Ogo	yes
Representative Edwin K. Propst	yes
Representative John Paul P. Sablan	yes
Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas	yes
Representative Denita K. Yangetmai	yes
Representative Ralph N. Yumul	yes
Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez	yes

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

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 20 members present voting “yes,” House Concurrent Resolution 23-1 is hereby adopted. Thank you, colleagues.

The Chair directed the members to item XVIII, Announcements and recognized Representative Ralph N. Yumul.

BILL CALENDAR

None

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Representative Ralph N. Yumul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you members for adopting House Concurrent Resolution 23-1. The Ways and Means will convene this afternoon at 3:00 p.m. We encourage every member to sit in and take part as we deliberate on the budget this afternoon. There. Let me hand it over to my co-Chair Rep. Attao on the provisions that will be discussed.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: I recognize Representative. Attao.

Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't know where the Chairman of Ways and Means was going, but I believe that obviously we have the numbers in front of us, whatever is submitted by the Administration. I think all the members should participate in this. We have such a short window to get this bill taken care of so we can at least not disrupt the functions of the government. I guess the target date to effectuate the 72-hours is April 1st. So, if we can put our minds together, work on the provisions, it's the provisions that are the meat of this legislation. We have the numbers, but if we put the provisions and tighten it up

so that we, in the legislature also, up to date and pressed with all the information, most especially the collections that we'll be getting here on forward so that we can be able to determine what FY 2024 is going to look like and we will be getting that submission by May 1st. So, please members, if you are available, let's work with the Chairman and the members of the committee on Ways and Means at 3:00 p.m. we'll try to get this bill taken care of. Try to get it out of this body so the Senate have any changes that they may want to add. We can go to conference committee and address it. I hope we don't have to get to that point and whatever concerns that they may have right now with the current submission by the Administration we can address in the House, so we can smoothly pass the Senate and get to the Governor's desk for action and it'll give our people some opportunity to prepare themselves come April 1st. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you, Representative Attao. Chairman Yumul you're good?

Representative Ralph N. Yumul: Yeah. Thank you Speak. I yield.

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: Thank you and on that note too, we'll just wait in terms of the, you know, the process and the progress of the Ways and Means Committee in terms of the revised budget and I'm looking at maybe calling a session either Friday afternoon, probably the latest, might be Saturday morning, depending on when the Ways and Means gets the budget going out of committee. Okay. Just heads up. All right. Floor is still open under Announcements. Ready?

Several members voiced “ready.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph S. Villagomez: All right. We'll move down to Adjournment and I recognize the Floor Leader.

ADJOURNMENT

Floor Leader Edwin K. Propst: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Subject to the call, the Speaker, I move for adjournment.

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

The House adjourned at 2:20 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:

H. L. B. NO. 23-5: To amend the Rota Dog Control Act under Title 10, Division 1, Chapter 1, Article 2, of the Commonwealth Code. Introduced by REP. JULIE M. A. OGO of Rota, Precinct 7 (*for herself*) on March 9, 2023.

THIRD LEGISLATIVE DAY: NONE*Appearance of Measures introduced on the House Floor during the House Session on March 9, 2023:*

H. B. NO. 23-18: To reduce the CNMI's growing litter problem and to conserve resources by accepting beverage containers for refund value and providing penalties. Introduced by REP. MANNY G. T. CASTRO of Saipan, Precinct 2 (*for himself*, Representatives Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao, Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Marissa R. Flores, John Paul P. Sablan, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 9, 2023; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.

H. B. NO. 23-19: To provide a tax credit for taxpayers who make donations of cash or food supplies to a qualified local food pantry, homeless shelter, or soup kitchen. Introduced by REP. MANNY G. T. CASTRO of Saipan, Precinct 2 (*for himself*, Representatives Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Vicente C. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Julie M.A. Ogo, Edwin K. Propst, John Paul P. Sablan, and Edmund S. Villagomez) on March 9, 2023; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H. B. NO. 23-20: To amend the quorum and removal of members provisions for the State Board of Education; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. MANNY G. T. CASTRO of Saipan, Precinct 2 and REP. JOHN PAUL P. SABLAN of Saipan, Precinct 2 (*for themselves*, Representatives Vincent R.S. Aldan, Roman C. Benavente, Malcom J. Omar, and Edmund S. Villagomez) on March 9, 2023; subsequently moved and placed on the Bill Calendar.

H. B. NO. 23-21: To amend the compensation of the CNMI Cannabis Commission members. Introduced by REP. DIEGO V. F. CAMACHO of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Representatives Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Manny G. T. Castro, Marissa R. Flores, Julie M.A. Ogo, Malcom J. Omar, and Edwin K. Propst) March 9, 2023; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Cannabis and to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H. B. NO. 23-22: To establish an investigative division of the Office of Attorney General, codify investigative subpoena power and improve the investigation of cases involving public corruption. Introduced by REP. MARISSA R. FLORES of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for herself*, Representatives Julie M.A. Ogo, Edmund S. Villagomez and Denita Kaipat Yangetmai) March 9, 2023; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

H. B. NO. 23-23: To establish a CNMI Drug Overdose Policy; to authorize and mandate first responders to possess opioid overdose reversal medication; to authorize standing orders for opioid overdose reversal medication; to provide limited immunity for dispensing opioid overdose reversal medication; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. MALCOM J. OMAR of Saipan, Precinct 4 (*for himself*, Representative Julie M.A. Ogo) on March 9, 2023; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Health and Welfare.

H. B. NO. 23-24: To provide an affirmative defense against drug possession charges in the case of an overdose. Introduced by REP. MALCOM J. OMAR of Saipan, Precinct 4 (*for himself*) on March 9, 2023; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

H. B. NO. 23-25: To amend certain provisions of the CNMI Good Samaritan Act [7 CMC § 2801 *et seq.*]; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. MALCOM J. OMAR of Saipan, Precinct 4 (*for himself*) on March 9, 2023; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Health and Welfare.

H. B. NO. 23-26: To amend 4 CMC 1402 (g)(1) to allocate 10 percent of the excise tax to the Solid Waste Management Revolving Fund. Introduced by REP. BLAS JONATHAN "BJ" T. ATTAO of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for*

himself, Representatives Roman C. Benavente, Manny G. T. Castro, Marissa R. Flores, Julie M.A. Ogo, John Paul P. Sablan, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 9, 2023; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

[ADDED-3/9/2023] H. B. NO. 23-27: To ensure that the expenditure authority designated in the Annual Appropriation Act retains exclusive control over all funds appropriated to it. Introduced by REP. JOSEPH A. FLORES of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*) on March 9, 2023; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means and to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

[ADDED-3/9/2023] H. B. NO. 23-28: To clarify the process for appropriation of administrative expenses of the Department of Public Lands and timely transfer of funds to Marianas Public Land Trust. Introduced by REP. ANGELO A. CAMACHO of Saipan, Precinct 5 (*for himself*, Representatives Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Roman C. Benavente, Diego V. F. Camacho, Manny G. T. Castro, Malcom J. Omar, John Paul P. Sablan, Edmund S. Villagomez, and Denita Kaipat Yangetmai) on March 9, 2023; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

[ADDED-3/9/2023] H. B. NO. 23-29: To establish a reward for recovery of public funds and a mechanism for the payment of rewards for disclosures leading to the recovery of public funds; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. EDWIN K. PROPST of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*) on March 9, 2023; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

H. L. B. NO. 23-5: To amend the Rota Dog Control Act under Title 10, Division 1, Chapter 1, Article 2, of the Commonwealth Code. Introduced by REP. JULIE M. A. OGO of Rota, Precinct 7 (*for herself*) on March 9, 2023.

H. L. B. NO. 23-6: To re-appropriate Eleven Thousand Two Hundred Forty-Six Dollars (\$11,246.00) allotted under Tinian Local Law 18-09; Fourteen Thousand One Hundred Fifty-Nine Dollars (\$14,159.00) allotted under Tinian Local Law 19-13; Thirty Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty-Two Dollars (\$30,882.00) from Tinian Local Law 19-15; One Hundred Ninety-One Dollars (\$191.00) from Tinian Local Law 20-9; Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00) from Tinian Local Law 20-17; and One Thousand Forty Dollars (\$1,040.00) from Tinian Local Law 20-17; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. PATRICK H. SAN NICOLAS of Tinian, Precinct 6 (*for himself*) on March 9, 2023; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

[ADDED 3/9/2023] H. L. B. NO. 23-7: To appropriate \$65,000 of the Rota Poker License Fees Account (specifically under BU3302) and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. JULIE M. A. OGO of Rota, Precinct 7 (*for herself*) on March 9, 2023; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

[ADDED 3/9/2023] H. L. B. NO. 23-8: To appropriate \$1,000,000.00 of the dividends collected by the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority (CEDA) from the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC); and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. BLAS JONATHAN “BJ” T. ATTAO of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for himself*, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada, Vincent R.S. Aldan, Angelo A. Camacho, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Vicente C. Camacho, Manny G. T. Castro, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Thomas J. DIC. Manglona, Malcom J. Omar, Edwin K. Propst, John Paul P. Sablan, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul)

H. RES. NO. 23-5: To congratulate and honor all the women in the Commonwealth as we celebrate their contributions and achievements during the month of March 2023 proclaimed as CNMI Women’s Month and March 8th as International Women’s Day. Introduced by REP. DENITA KAIPAT YANGETMAI of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for herself*, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada, Vincent R.S. Aldan, Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Angelo A. Camacho, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Vicente C. Camacho, Manny G. T. Castro, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Thomas J. DIC. Manglona, Julie M. A. Ogo, Malcom J. Omar, Edwin K. Propst, John Paul P. Sablan, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Edmund S. Villagomez, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 9, 2023; subsequently placed on the Resolution Calendar.

C. RES. NO. 23-1: To honor and commend the late Honorable Jacinta Matagolai Kaipat for her relentless dedication and selfless contributions to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and to extend our heartfelt condolences to her bereaved family on her untimely passing. Introduced by REP. ROY C. A. ADA of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Representatives Vincent R.S. Aldan, Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Vicente C. Camacho, Manny G. T. Castro, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Thomas J. DIC. Manglona, Julie M. A. Ogo, Malcom J. Omar, Edwin K. Propst, John

Paul P. Sablan, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on March 9, 2023; subsequently placed on the Resolution Calendar.

House information on deadlines for override: None