



HOUSE JOURNAL THIRD REGULAR SESSION, 2026

3rd Day, Third Regular Session

Wednesday, February 25, 2026

The House of Representatives of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature convened its Third Day, Third Regular Session on Wednesday, February 25, 2026, at 10:19 a.m., in the House Chamber on Capitol Hill, Saipan, Commonwealth Northern Mariana Islands.

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

A moment of silence was observed.

ROLL CALL

The Clerk called the roll for attendance with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher Aldan Ada	Absent (Excused)
Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan	Present
Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino, Jr.	Present
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao	Present
Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente	Present
Representative Angelo Atalig Camacho	Present
Representative Diego Vincent Fejeran Camacho	Present
Representative Joel Castro Camacho	Present
Representative Joseph Arriola Flores	Present
Representative Marissa Renee Flores	Present
Representative Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona	Present
Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo	Absent (Excused)
Representative Malcom Jason Omar	Present
Representative Raymond Ulloa Palacios	Present
Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar	Present
Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan	Present
Representative Patrick Hofschneider San Nicolas	Present
Representative Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez	Present
Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai	Absent (Excused)
Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul	Present

Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, 17 members are present and 3 members are absent.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 17 members present, a quorum is duly established. Let the record reflect that Representatives Roy Ada, Julie Ogo, and Denita Yangetmai are excused for today’s session. I now recognize the Floor Leader for the proper motion.

The Floor Leader moved to suspend Rule III, Section 6.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the Chair recognized the Clerk to call the roll for vote.

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

Representative Roy Christopher Aldan Ada	Absent (Excused)
Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan	Yes
Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino, Jr.	Yes
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao	Yes
Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente	Yes
Representative Angelo Atalig Camacho	Yes
Representative Diego Vincent Fejeran Camacho	Yes
Representative Joel Castro Camacho	Yes
Representative Joseph Arriola Flores	Yes
Representative Marissa Renee Flores	Yes
Representative Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona	Yes
Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo	Absent (Excused)
Representative Malcom Jason Omar	Yes
Representative Raymond Ulloa Palacios	Yes
Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar	Yes
Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan	Yes
Representative Patrick Hofschneider San Nicolas	Yes
Representative Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez	Yes
Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai	Absent (Excused)
Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul	Yes

Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, all 17 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 17 members present voting “yes,” the motion carried. Thank you, colleagues. We now proceed to Item No. 2, Public Comments. The podium is open to receive comments. Please state your name and the entity you represent, you have five minutes. If you have statements, please submit them to the Sergeant-at-Arms for forwarding to the Clerk’s office.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public Comments was present by five individuals on the following items:

H. B. NO. 24-96: To appropriate \$960,235.74 in Tobacco Settlement Funds, identified by the Governor as additional funds available for appropriation in Governors Communication (House) 24-103, to the Marianas Visitors Authority for tourism recovery initiatives.

H. B. NO. 24-97: To exempt the Commonwealth Ports Authority from the obligation to remit the one percent (1%) Public Auditor Fee pertaining to seaport revenues.

There being no further public comments presented, the Chair proceeded to Item No. 3, Adoption of Journals, and recognized the Clerk.

ADOPTION OF JOURNALS

The Clerk announced the following House Journal:

Eleventh Day, Second Regular Session Journal of December 22, 2025

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved to adopt Eleventh Day, Second Regular Session Journal of December 22, 2025. The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to adopt Eleventh Day, Second Regular Session Journal of December 22, 2025 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair proceeded to Item No. 4, Introduction of Bills, and recognized the Floor Leader, under House Bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

House Bills:

Representative Marissa Renee Flores formally introduced the following and, there being no objection, requested that it be introduced by the Committee of the whole House.

There being no objection on the floor, the resolution was accordingly introduced by the Committee of the whole House. The author then requested that it be placed on the Bill Calendar.

H. B. NO. 24-96: To appropriate \$960,235.74 in Tobacco Settlement Funds, identified by the Governor as additional funds available for appropriation in Governors Communication (House) 24-103, to the Marianas Visitors Authority for tourism recovery initiatives. **Prefiled by: REP. MARISSA R. FLORES** of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for herself, Representatives Roy C. A. Ada, Vincent R. Aldan, Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Thomas J. Dlc. Manglona, Julie M. A. Ogo, Malcolm J. Omar, Raymond U. Palacios, Elias J. M. Rangamar, John Paul P. Sablan, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita K. Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul*)

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved to suspend Rule LX, Section 8.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to suspend Rule LX, Section 8 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair recognized Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar.

Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar formally introduced the following bill, which was then referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means:

H. B. NO. 24-97: To exempt the Commonwealth Ports Authority from the obligation to remit the one percent (1%) Public Auditor Fee pertaining to seaport revenues. **Prefiled by: REP. ELIAS J. M. RANGAMAR** of Saipan, Precinct 3 *(for himself)*

Representative Marissa Renee Flores formally introduce the following bill, which was then referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means:

H. B. NO. 24-98: To amend Title 4 of the Commonwealth Code to provide Business Gross Revenue Tax relief for taxpayers operating at a net loss under the Northern Mariana Islands Territorial Income Tax; and for other purposes. **Prefiled by: REP. MARISSA R. FLORES** of Saipan, Precinct 3 *(for herself)*

Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan formally introduced the following bill, which was then referred to the House Committee on Judicial and Governmental Operations:

H. B. NO. 24-99: To amend Title 6, Division 1, §1609, Theft of Utility Services, to provide a permissive inference of intent under specified circumstances while preserving due process protections; and for other purposes. **Prefiled by: REP. VINCENT R. ALDAN** of Saipan, Precinct 1 *(for himself)*

Representative Marissa Renee Flores formally introduced the following bill, which was then referred to the House Committee on Commerce:

H. B. NO. 24-100: To amend the statutory language governing dormant and unclaimed accounts to clarify the regulatory provisions regarding dormancy periods, the perpetual right of owners to claim funds, and the administration of escheated funds. **Prefiled by: REP. MARISSA R. FLORES** of Saipan, Precinct 3 *(for herself)*

Representative Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez formally introduced the following bill and, there being no objection, requested that it be introduced by the Committee of the whole House.

There being no objection on the floor, the bill was accordingly introduced by the Committee of the whole House. The Chair then demanded that it be placed on the Bill Calendar for consideration.

H. B. NO. 24-101: To name the structure for the CNMI Women’s Association Center as the “Felicidad Taman Ogumoro Women’s Development Center”; and for other purposes. **Prefiled by: REP. EDMUND S. VILLAGOMEZ** of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for himself, Representatives Roy C. A. Ada, Vincent R. Aldan, Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Deigo V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Thoman J. DiC. Manglona, Julie M. A. Ogo, Malcolm J. Omar, Raymond U. Palacios, Elias J. M. Rangamar, John Paul P. Sablan, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Denita K. Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul*)

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved to suspend Rule IX, Section 8.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to suspend Rule IX, Section 8 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair opened the floor for introductions of unnumbered bills. There being no introductions of unnumbered bills, the Chair proceeded to House Local Bills and recognized Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao.

House Local Bills:

Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao, on behalf of Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo, formally introduced the following bill:

H. L. B. NO. 24-47: To appropriate One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00) for the continued operation and regulatory oversight of the Rota Casino Gaming Commission; and for other purposes. **Prefiled by: REP. JULIE M. A. OGO** of Rota, Precinct 7 (*for herself*)

Representative Malcolm Jason Omar formally introduced the following bill:

H. L. B. NO. 24-48: To re-appropriate funds under Section 2(t)(d) of Saipan Local Law 23-04 (Project Code 7190M); and for other purposes. **Prefiled by: REP. JOEL C. CAMACHO** and **REP. MALCOLM J. OMAR** of Saipan, Precinct 4 (*for themselves*)

The Chair opened the floor for introductions of unnumbered House Local Bills and recognized Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao.

Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao, on behalf of Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo, formally introduced the following bill:

H. L. B. NO. 24-49: To appropriate Ninety Nine Thousand Six Hundred Twenty Five Dollars (\$99,625.00) for Medical Subsistence, Municipal Scholarship, and operations of the Mayor of Rota. **Introduced by: REP. JULIE M. A. OGO** of Rota, Precinct 7 (*for herself*)

Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul formally introduced the following bill:

H. L. B. NO. 24-50: To appropriate local funds from revenues collected pursuant to Saipan Local Law 11-2; and for other purposes. **Introduced by: REP. RALPH N. YUMUL** of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for himself*)

There being no further introductions of unnumbered House Local Bills and no item under House Legislative Initiatives, the Chair proceeded to Item No. 5, Introduction of Resolutions, and recognized the Floor Leader, under House Resolutions.

House Legislative Initiatives:

None

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

House Resolutions:

Representative Marissa Renee Flores, on behalf of Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, formally introduced the following resolution and, there being no objection, requested that it be introduced by the Committee of the whole House. There being no objection on the floor, the resolution was accordingly introduced by the Committee of the whole House. The Floor Leader then requested that it be placed on the Resolution Calendar for consideration.

H. RES. NO. 24-25: To Congratulate and Honor all the women in the Commonwealth as we celebrate their contributions and achievements during the month of March 2026 proclaimed as CNMI Women’s Month and March 8th as International Women’s Day. **Prefiled by: REP. DENITA KAIPAT YANGETMAI** of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for herself, Representative Roy C. A. Ada, Vincent R. Aldan, Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Thomas J. DIC. Manglona, Julie M. A. Ogo, Malcolm J. Omar, Raymond*

U. Palacios, Elias J. M. Rangamar, John Paul P. Sablan, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Edmund S. Villagomez, and Ralph N. Yumul)

Representative Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez formally introduced the following resolution and, there being no objection, requested that it be introduced by the Committee of the whole House.

There being no objection on the floor, the resolution was accordingly introduced by the Committee of the whole House. The Chair then demanded it be placed on the Resolution Calendar for consideration.

H. RES. NO. 24-26: To recognize Aria Keilbach for her esteemed accomplishments as Miss Northern Marianas Earth 2025 representing the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Miss Earth. **Prefiled by: REP. EDMUND S. VILLAGOMEZ** of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for himself, Representative Roy C. A. Ada, Vincent R. Aldan, Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Thomas J. DiC. Manglona, Julie M. A. Ogo, Malcolm J. Omar, Raymond U. Palacios, Elias J. M. Rangamar, John Paul P. Sablan, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Denita K. Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul*)

The Chair opened the floor for introduction of unnumbered House Resolutions. There being no introduction of unnumbered House Resolutions and no items under House Joint Resolutions through House Concurrent Resolutions, the Chair proceeded to item No. 7, Senate Communications, and recognized the Clerk.

House Joint Resolutions:

None

House Commemorative Resolutions:

None

House Concurrent Resolutions:

None

SENATE COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk announced the following Senate Communications:

SEN. COMM. 24-80: (2/17/2026) Returning H. J. R. 24-10, entitled, “*To honor and congratulate CITADEL Pacific Ltd. (CPL) on the occasion of its 20th Anniversary.*”, which was adopted by the Senate without amendments on February 13, 2026. [*For Info*]

SEN. COMM. 24-81: (2/17/2026) Returning H. B. No. 24-11, entitled, “*To provide greater authority to government transit buses owned and operated by the Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority (COTA); to establish traffic safety measures, enhance public engagement, ensure fiscal responsibility, and comply with existing CNMI laws and federal standards; and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate without amendments on February 13, 2026. [*For Info-Will go to Governor*]

SEN. COMM. 24-82: (2/17/2026) Returning H. B. No. 24-35, entitled, “*To amend certain provisions of the CNMI Good Samaritan Act [7 CMC § 2801 et seq.]; and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate without amendments on February 13, 2026. [*For Info-Will go to Governor*]

SEN. COMM. 24-83: (2/17/2026) Returning H. B. No. 24-63, entitled, “*To amend Title 4 sections 1991 to 1995 relating to the 3% construction tax on gross revenues derived from certain non- residential construction projects and to enact a new section 1996 pertaining to Applicability; and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate without amendments on February 13, 2026. [*For Info-Will go to Governor*]

SEN. COMM. 24-84: (2/17/2026) Transmitting for House action **S. B. NO. 24-24**, entitled, “*To authorize the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands join the CNMI-Guam Interjurisdictional Corrections Compact to improve and expand inmate rehabilitation and training; and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate on February 13, 2026. [*For action*]

SEN. COMM. 24-85: (2/17/2026) Transmitting for House action **S. B. NO. 24-47**, entitled, “*To require all contractors to be licensed in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; and for other purposes.*”, which was passed by the Senate on February 13, 2026. [*For action*]

SEN. COMM. 24-86: (2/19/2026) Transmitting a certified copy of Senate Resolution No. 24-13, entitled, “*To recognize and commend Honorable Justice Perry Borja Inos for his long-lasting contributions to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and its people.*” [*For Info*]

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved to accept Senate Communications No. 80 through 24-86. The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to accept Senate Communications No. 24-80 through 24-86 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair recognized Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao.

Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If there is no objection from the members, can we go back to Introduction of House Local Bills? I have one more unnumbered House Local Bill for Representative Julie Ogo.

Several members of the House voiced “no objection.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: There being no objection, we will go back to House Local Bills after Senate Communications.

Pursuant to the actions taken,

- 1- *Senate Communications No. 24-84, referencing, “(2/17/2026) Transmitting for House action **S. B. NO. 24-24**, entitled, “**To authorize the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands join the CNMI-Guam Interjurisdictional Corrections Compact to improve and expand inmate rehabilitation and training; and for other purposes.**”, which was passed by the Senate on February 13, 2026. [For action]”, was referred to the House Committee on Judicial and Governmental Operations; and*
- 2- *Senate Communications No. 24-85, referencing, “(2/17/2026) Transmitting for House action **S. B. NO. 24-47**, entitled, “**To require all contractors to be licensed in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; and for other purposes.**”, which was passed by the Senate on February 13, 2026. [For action],” was referred to the House Committee on Commerce.*

There being nothing further, the Chair proceeded to Item No. 5, Introduction of Resolutions, and recognized Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao, under House Local Bills.

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

House Local Bills:

Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao, on behalf of Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo, formally introduced the following bill:

H. L. B. NO. 24-51: To appropriate Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000.00) for the Rota Aging Program and the Rota DCCA Flame Tree Arts. **Introduced by: REP. JULIE M. A. OGO** of Rota, Precinct 7 (*for herself*)

The Chair opened the floor for introductions of unnumbered bills. There being no introductions of unnumbered bills, the Chair proceeded Item No. 8, House Communications, and recognized the Clerk.

HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk announced the following House Communications:

HSE. COMM. 24-83: (2/6/2026) Resignation of Representative Julie M.A. Ogo as Chair, House Committee on Tourism — Notice to the Speaker (Eff. Feb. 16, 2026). [For Info]

HSE.COMM. 24-84: (2/6/2026) Temporary Designation of Oversight Authority — House Committee on Tourism (Representative Joel C. Camacho, Vice Chairman). [For Info]

HSE. COMM. 24-85: (2/11/2026) From Representative Denita K. Yangetmai informing the Speaker that she will be out of the Commonwealth on personal leave from February 16, 2026 and returning March 16, 2026, and requests to be excused from all official functions during her absence. [For Info]

HSE. COMM. 24-86: (2/19/2026) From the Speaker appointing Representative Marissa R. Flores as Chair of the House Standing Committee on Tourism, pursuant to House Rule VII, Section 8, replacing Representative Julie M. Ogo effective February 16, 2026. [For Info]

The Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor and no item under Item No. 9, Communication from the Judicial Branch, the Chair proceeded to Item No. 10, Communications from Departments & Agencies, and recognized the Clerk.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

None

COMMUNICATIONS FROM DEPARTMENTS & AGENCIES

The Clerk announced the following Communications from Departments & Agencies:

DEPT./AGCY. COMM. 24-27: (2/3/2026 received 2/6/2026) Department of Public Works: Submission of CNMI 4-Year Territorial Transportation Improvement Plan (TTIP) FY2023– FY2026, Amendment No. 03 — Request for Review and Comment; **Public Comment Deadline: February 26, 2026 (2:00 p.m.)**. [For Info]

The Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the Chair proceeded to Item No. 11, Miscellaneous Communications, and recognized the Clerk.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk announced the following Miscellaneous Communications:

MISC. COMM. 24-97: (2/11/2026) Newly installed Saipan Chamber of Commerce 2026 Board of Directors and Officers. [*For Info*]

The Chair opened the floor for discussion and recognized himself.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: I would like to congratulate the newly installed Saipan Chamber of Commerce 2026 Board of Directors and Officers. Let us continue to work together to further improve our economy and the business sector in our community. With nothing further and there being no items under Item No. 12, Reports of Standing Committees, through Item No. 14, Unfinished Business, we now proceed to Item No. 15, Resolution Calendar, and I recognize the Floor Leader.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

None

REPORTS OF SPECIAL AND CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

RESOLUTION CALENDAR

The Floor Leader moved to adopt H. Res. No. 24-25:

H. RES. NO. 24-25: To Congratulate and Honor all the women in the Commonwealth as we celebrate their contributions and achievements during the month of March 2026 proclaimed as CNMI Women's Month and March 8th as International Women's Day.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to adopt H. Res. No. 24-25 was carried by voice vote. There was no "nay" vote.

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved to adopt H. Res. No. 24-26:

H. RES. NO. 24-26: To recognize Aria Keilbach for her esteemed accomplishments as Miss Northern Marianas Earth 2025 representing the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Miss Earth.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to adopt H. Res. No. 24-26 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair proceeded to Item No.16, Bill Calendar, and recognized the Floor Leader.

BILL CALENDAR

The Floor Leader moved to suspend Rule VII, Section 9, and Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to suspend Rule VII, Section 9, and Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Floor Leader moved for the passage on First and Final Reading on H. B. No. 24-96:

H. B. NO. 24-96: To appropriate \$960,235.74 in Tobacco Settlement Funds, identified by the Governor as additional funds available for appropriation in Governors Communication (House) 24-103, to the Marianas Visitors Authority for tourism recovery initiatives.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion and recognized the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Marissa Renee Flores: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, colleagues. I know that some of us are ready to vote; some of us may be unclear. But we passed this bill as a whole, so I would be remiss if we did not also mention to the public why this bill is so important. I rise in continued support of House Bill No. 24-96, which appropriates **\$960,235.74** in Tobacco Settlement Funds and not the Retirement Funds. Let us be clear about that, because all we heard was “settlement,” and it might have caused havoc, maybe later on. So, it is tobacco settlement funds identified by the Governor in the governor's communications to the House, No. 24-103, to the Marianas Visitors Authority for tourism recovery initiatives. This measure represents a lawful exercise of the Legislature’s constitutional power of application within the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The constitution vests this body with the authority to allocate public funds. House Bill No. 24-96 does precisely that. It directs identified available funds toward a defined economic purpose. However, we must be clear about the stakes. If tourism stabilization efforts do not succeed, the Commonwealth may face serious consequences, including further declines in government revenue derived from visitor-related economic activity, additional business closures within the hospitality, retail, and service sectors; increased unemployment and workforce out-migration; reduced tax collection impacting the general fund; and greater physical strain on public safety, health, and education services. These are not abstract risks. Tourism remains the principal driver of economic activity. A continued contraction without stabilization efforts would compound existing fiscal pressures. This is why this appropriation is necessary. But we also must define roles clearly. The Legislature’s responsibility is to appropriate funds consistent with

constitutional authority and fiscal law. Through House Bill No. 24-96, we fulfill that responsibility. Execution, implementation, and measurable outcomes fall within the authority of the Executive Branch. The administration of these funds, the strategic deployment of tourism recovery initiatives, and the performance results achieved are executive functions. While we authorize this appropriation in good faith and in response to identified economic need, the executive branch is accountable for the effective and transparent use of these funds. Should these initiatives fail due to mismanagement, lack of execution, or absence of measurable performance, this body retains its full oversight authority. Appropriation does not mean abdication of oversight. We will expect reporting; we will expect measurable benchmarks; and we will expect transparency. This measure reflects constitutional balance, legislative authorization, and executive implementation subject to legislative oversight. Colleagues, I ask that you support this bill because we are legally grounded by the constitutional scope. It is responsive to current economic conditions, but it also affirms that the accountability remains intact. For these reasons, colleagues, I ask for your full support on the passage of House Bill No. 24-96. Thank you.

There being no further discussion on the floor, the Chair recognized the Clerk to call the roll on the motion on the passage of H. B. No. 24-96, First and Final Reading, with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher Aldan Ada	Absent (Excused)
Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan	Yes
Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino, Jr.	Yes
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao	Yes
Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente	Yes
Representative Angelo Atalig Camacho	Yes
Representative Diego Vincent Fejeran Camacho	Yes
Representative Joel Castro Camacho	Yes
Representative Joseph Arriola Flores	Yes
Representative Marissa Renee Flores	Yes
Representative Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona	Yes
Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo	Absent (Excused)
Representative Malcom Jason Omar	Yes
Representative Raymond Ulloa Palacios	Yes
Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar	Yes
Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan	Yes
Representative Patrick Hofschneider San Nicolas	Yes
Representative Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez	Yes
Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai	Absent (Excused)
Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul	Yes

Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, all 17 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With 17 members present voting “yes,” House Bill No. 24-96 hereby passes the House. I now recognize the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved to suspend Rule VII, Section 9 and, Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to suspend Rule VII, Section 9 and, Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved for the passage on First and Final Reading on H. B. No. 24-101:

H. B. NO. 24-101: To name the structure for the CNMI Women’s Association Center as the “Felicidad Taman Ogumoro Women’s Development Center”; and for other purposes.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the Chair recognized the Clerk to call the roll for vote.

The Clerk called the roll on the motion for the passage on H. B. No. 24-101, First and Final Reading, with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher Aldan Ada	Absent (Excused)
Representative Vincent Raymond Alda	Yes
Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino, Jr.	Yes
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao	Yes
Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente	Yes
Representative Angelo Atalig Camacho	Yes
Representative Diego Vincent Fejeran Camacho	Yes
Representative Joel Castro Camacho	Yes
Representative Joseph Arriola Flores	Yes
Representative Marissa Renee Flores	Yes
Representative Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona	Yes
Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo	Absent (Excused)
Representative Malcom Jason Omar	Yes
Representative Raymond Ulloa Palacios	Yes
Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar	Yes
Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan	Yes
Representative Patrick Hofschneider San Nicolas	Yes
Representative Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez	Yes
Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai	Absent (Excused)
Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul	Yes

Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, all 17 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 17 members present voting “yes,” House Bill No. 24-101 hereby passes the House. Thank you, colleagues. As mentioned earlier, we now go back to Item No. 6, Messages from the Governor. But before we get into that, I will call a recess.

The House recessed at 11:02 a.m.

Recess

The House reconvened at 11:23 a.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Before we went into recess, we just got done with the Bill Calendar. And as mentioned, before recess, we will now go back to Item No. 6, Messages from the Governor, and I recognize the Clerk.

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Clerk announced the following Messages from the Governor:

GOV. COMM. 24-97: (12/23/2025 received 12/29/2025) Informing the House that he signed into law and line item vetoed in parts, H. B. No. 24-80, HS1, *(To Repeal and Re-Enact Public Law 24- 14 to further Define and Identify General Revenues and approve revenues and resources of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands as identified pursuant to Article III, Section 9 (a) of the CNMI Constitution, as amended, and 1 CMC Division 7, for Fiscal Year 2026 and make appropriations for the operations and activities of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, its agencies, instrumentalities, and independent programs, and to provide budget authority for government corporations for Fiscal Year 2026; and for other purposes.)*. Became **Public Law No. 24-20 [Item Veto Deadline: 2/27/2026]** *Note: The communication was read on January 16, 2026; and subsequently referred to the House Ways and Means Committee.*

GOV. COMM. 24-113: (2/10/2026) Transmitting Mr. Oscar Patrick Quitugua’s résumé, police clearance, statement of financial interest, and drug test receipt in support of his renomination to serve as a member of the Public Utilities Commission, representing the First Senatorial District. *Note: The renomination was previously read and referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations and the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on February 9, 2026. [Deadline: April 22, 2026]*

GOV. COMM. 24-114: (2/11/2026) Informing the House that he signed into law H. L. B. No. 24-36, *(To re-appropriate the remaining fund balance of \$89,217.00 under Saipan Local Law 22-15 (Project Code 3754H) for the maintenance and improvements of Commonwealth parks and recreational facilities in Precinct III and the maintenance and improvements of Garapan Core and the Froilan C.*

Tenorio Beach Road pathway in Precinct III; and for other purposes.). Became **Saipan Local Law No. 24-19**. [For Info]

GOV. COMM. 24-115: (2/11/2026) Informing the House that he signed into law H. L. B. No. 24-38, *(To appropriate the fund remaining balance of \$48,450.33 under Section 2(t)(4) of Saipan Local Law 20-26 (Project Code 7190M) for the maintenance, repairs and improvements of Commonwealth parks and recreational facilities in Precinct IV; and for other purposes.)*. Became **Saipan Local Law No. 24-20**. [For Info]

GOV. COMM. 24-116: (2/11/2026) Informing the House that he signed into law H. L. B. No. 24-41, *(To re-appropriate Eighty Thousand Dollars (\$80,000.00) allotted under Saipan Local Law 20-26; and for other purposes.)*. Became **Saipan Local Law No. 24-21**. [For Info]

GOV. COMM. 24-117: (2/13/2026) Informing the House that he signed into law H. L. B. No. 24-45, D1, *(To re-appropriate Two Hundred Fifty-Six Thousand Two Hundred Thirty-Five Dollars (\$256,235.00) from the fund balances allotted under Saipan Local Law 22-01, specifically Business Unit 4963V; and for other purposes.)*. Became **Saipan Local Law No. 24-22**. [For Info]

GOV. COMM. 24-118: (2/19/2026) Transmitting Mr. Oscar Patrick Quitugua's drug test results in connection with his renomination to serve as a member of the Public Utilities Commission, representing the First Senatorial District; completing the required submission of his renomination package. *Note: The renomination was previously read and referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations and the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on February 9, 2026. [Deadline: April 22, 2026]*

Pursuant to the actions taken:

- 1) *Governor's Communication No. 24- 113, referencing, "(2/10/2026) Transmitting Mr. Oscar Patrick Quitugua's résumé, police clearance, statement of financial interest, and drug test receipt in support of his renomination to serve as a member of the Public Utilities Commission, representing the First Senatorial District.", was referred to the House Committees on Judicial and Governmental Operations and, Transportation and Infrastructure; and*
- 2) *Governor's Communication No. 24-118, referencing, "(2/19/2026) Transmitting Mr. Oscar Patrick Quitugua's drug test results in connection with his renomination to serve as a member of the Public Utilities Commission, representing the First Senatorial District; completing the required submission of his renomination package.", was referred to the House Committees on Judicial and Governmental Operations and, Transportation and Infrastructure.*

The Chair opened the floor for discussion and recognized Representative Joel Castro Camacho.

Representative Joel Castro Camacho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of Representative Malcolm Omar and myself, I want to thank the Governor and the administration for signing into law House Local Bill No. 24-38, which is now Saipan Local Law No. 24-20. Thank you.

The Chair recognized Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino, Jr.

Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Honorable Governor Apatang for signing into law House Local Bill No. 24-41, which is now Saipan Local Law No. 24-21, which reappropriates \$80,000 for the beautiful village of Precinct 2. Thank you.

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Marissa Renee Flores: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to take this time to thank the Governor for passing House Local Bill No. 24-36, which is now Saipan Local Law No. 24-19, for the maintenance upkeep of recreational facilities related in Precinct 3. On behalf of Precinct 3 representatives and myself, thank you.

The Chair recognized Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan.

Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Under Governor's Communication No. 24-97, informing the House that he had signed into law, with a line-item veto in parts, House Bill No. 24-80, House Substitute 1, which became Public Law No. 24-20. This communication was referred to your standing committee, Mr. Speaker, by yourself. We understand that the item-veto deadline is set for the 27th of this month. Following the referral, Mr. Speaker, your Committee on Ways and Means, together with the Senate Committee on Fiscal Affairs, deliberated for over four weeks on the items vetoed by the administration.

Under Section 201, on page 15, line 7, entitled "General Fund Perspective Adjustment," at a figure of \$4.4 million, both committees decided that the veto stands.

Under Section 203, entitled "Reporting Requirements for the Secretary of Finance," on page 18, lines 5 through 15, both committees decided to override Section 203(d), and the veto stands for Section 203(e).

Under Section 602, entitled "Hiring Restrictions," on page 23, lines 15 through 22, continuing on page 24, lines 1 through 5, both committees decided to override the line-item veto for Sections 602(a) and (b).

Under Section 603, entitled "Salary Cap," on page 24, lines 7 through 11, both committees decided to override Section 603(a).

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, under Section 604, entitled “Salary Increases After Revised Budget Submittal,” on page 25, lines 6 through 15, both committees have decided that the veto for Sections 604(a) and (b) stands.

Under Section 609, entitled “Vacant Positions,” on page 27, lines 7 through 11, both committees have decided that these line-item provisions will be overridden.

The Chair called for a recess.

The House recessed at 11:30 a.m.

Recess

The House reconvened at 11:32 a.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Before we went on recess, Chairman John Paul Sablan still had the floor discussing the override and what stands. Representative John Paul Sablan, you still have the floor.

Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, if I may go back to Section 609, entitled “Vacant Positions,” on page 27, lines 7 through 11, both committees decided that the veto on these provisions stands.

Moving along, under Section 612, entitled “Hazardous Pay,” on page 28, lines 7 through 9, both committees have decided that this line-item veto will be overridden.

Under Section 617, entitled “Outside-Sourced Revenue Received by the CNMI,” lines 17 through 21, continuing to page 30, lines 1 through 9, both committees have decided that the veto on these provisions stands.

Moving along, Mr. Speaker and members, under Section 703, entitled “Judicial Branch,” lines 10 through 13, both committees decided to override this item provision.

Moving to Section 704, entitled “Legislative Branch,” on page 35, lines 1 through 4, both committees decided to override the line-item veto for Section 704(j), and the veto for Section 704(k) stands.

The lines vetoed on page 35 are lines 1 through 4 and lines 17 through 22, continuing to page 36, lines 8 through 12.

Moving to Section 705.1, entitled “Limitations on 1 CMC 7604 and 7204: Austerity Provisions & Prohibitions on Retroactivity,” on page 39, lines 19 through 21, both committees have decided to override the veto.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: So, that is page 41 and 42? You said page 39.

Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan: Mr. Speaker, I have page 39 here.

The Chair called for a recess.

The House recessed at 11:37 a.m.

Recess

The House reconvened at 11:43 a.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Before we went on recess, Representative John Paul Sablan had the floor continuing his discussion regarding Governor's Communication No. 24-97. Representative John Paul Sablan, you have the floor.

Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before recess, we were on Section 704, entitled "Legislative Branch," on page 35, lines 1 through 4. Item (j) — both committees have decided to override the veto, and item (k) stands. Moving to Section 705, entitled "Limitations on 1 CMC 7604 and 7204: Austerity Provisions & Prohibitions on Retroactivity."

The Chair called for recess.

The House recessed at 11:44 a.m.

Recess

The House reconvened at 11:46 a.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Chairman John Paul Sablan, you have the floor.

Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and my apologies, Mr. Speaker and members.

We are now under Section 705, entitled "Executive Branch." For Section 705(d) on page 40, lines 12 through 15, and Section 705(f) on page 41, lines 1 through 9, both committees decided to override the vetoes.

Moving to Section 705.1, entitled "Limitations on 1 CMC 7604 and 7204: Austerity Provisions & Prohibitions on Retroactivity," on page 41, lines 1 through 8, both committees decided to override the vetoed item.

Moving to Section 708, entitled "Third Senatorial District – Mayor of Saipan; Mayor of the Northern Mariana Islands; and Saipan and Northern Mariana Islands Municipal Council," on page 45, lines 5 through 10, both committees decided that the veto stands. A standalone bill will be drafted to address the intent.

Moving to Section 709, entitled “Other Programs,” on page 48, lines 17 through 19, both committees decided to override these line-item provisions.

Moving further, Mr. Speaker and members, to Section 711, entitled “Department of Public Lands,” on page 50, lines 20 through 21, and continuing to page 51, lines 3 through 5, both committees decided to override the vetoes.

Moving to Section 712, entitled “Financial Data and Transparency Information Access,” on page 51, lines 17 through 22, continuing to page 52, lines 1 through 13, both committees decided to override these line-item provisions.

Under Section 713, entitled “Violations of Spending Limits,” lines 17 through 22, continuing to page 53, lines 1 through 5, both committees decided to override the veto.

Moving to the last section, Section 802, entitled “Non-General Revenue Sources,” on page 55, lines 6 through 8, both committees decided that the veto stands, and on lines 9 through 12, both committees decided to override.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker and members, regarding Schedule A on page 5, there is no line number, but under the Independent Program, titled “CNMI State Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Inc.,” with a line-item figure of \$63,156, both committees decided that the veto stands. Representative Patrick San Nicolas will introduce standalone legislation to address the concerns of the administration and the Governor.

These, Mr. Speaker and members, are the actions taken over the four weeks since Public Law 24-20 was enacted. These decisions were made by both the House Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Committee on Fiscal Affairs. I respectfully ask for the full support of this August body, and Mr. Speaker, that you ask the Floor Leader to make the proper motion. Thank you. If there are any questions, I stand ready to answer to the best of my ability.

The Chair called for recess.

The House recessed at 11:52 a.m.

Recess

The House reconvened at 12:17 p.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Before we went on recess, the Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, Representative John Paul Sablan, has explained the override which stands under Public Law 24-20. And with that, I recognize the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved to override the following items from Public Law 24-20:

1. Section 203(d), page 18, lines 5-15;
2. Section 602(a), page 23, lines 15-23;
3. Section 602(b), page 24, lines 1-5;

4. Section 603(a), page 24, lines 7-11;
5. Section 612, page 18, lines 7-9;
6. Section 703(d), page 31, lines 10-13;
7. Section 704(j), page 35, lines 1-4;
8. Section 705(d), page 40; lines 12-15;
9. Section 705(f), page 41, lines 1-9;
10. Section 705.1, page 41, lines 14-22 and, page 42, lines 1-8;
11. Section 709(e), page 48, lines 17-19;
12. Section 711(a), page 50, lines 20-21 and, page 51, lines 3-5;
13. Section 712, page 51, lines 17-22, and page 52, lines 1-16;
14. Section 713, page 52, lines 18-22, and page 53, lines 1-5;
15. Section 802(b), page 55, lines 9-12.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion and recognized Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul.

Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Chairman John Paul Sablan, for reviewing the line-item veto by the Governor. This does not necessarily mean that the House completely disagrees. The House chose to override because both Houses sat down and thoroughly discussed the overrides, and both Houses reached agreement during our deliberations. It is not that we are challenging the authority of the Executive Branch, but rather we are questioning some of the recommendations made by the Attorney of the Executive Branch. I therefore ask the members to support the veto-related overrides mentioned by the Floor Leader. This does not challenge the Governor's authority; it reflects our disagreement with advice that has been given by counsel over the years. This is the first time both Houses have met and reached agreement on such actions. With that, I ask the members to support the overrides as mentioned by both the Chairman and the Floor Leader. Thank you.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Ready? Members, as a reminder, the override requires a two-thirds vote. There is a total of 20 members, and two-thirds of 20 is 14. This is for clarification, for both the public watching and members who may have questions. A "yes" vote indicates support for the override, and a "no" vote indicates opposition. If there is any confusion, you may always request a recess so we can clarify before you cast your vote. With that, I recognize the Clerk to call the roll for the vote.

The Clerk called the roll on the motion to override the veto lines of Public Law 24-20, with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher Aldan Ada
Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan

Absent (Excused)
Yes

Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino, Jr.	Yes
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao	Yes
Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente	Yes
Representative Angelo Atalig Camacho	Yes
Representative Diego Vincent Fejeran Camacho	Yes
Representative Joel Castro Camacho	Yes
Representative Joseph Arriola Flores	Yes
Representative Marissa Renee Flores	Yes
Representative Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona	Yes
Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo	Absent (Excused)
Representative Malcom Jason Omar	Yes
Representative Raymond Ulloa Palacios	Yes
Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar	Yes
Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan	Yes
Representative Patrick Hofschneider San Nicolas	Yes
Representative Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez	Yes
Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai	Absent (Excused)
Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul	Yes

Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, all 17 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 17 members voting “yes,” having received the required two-thirds vote, the veto of all the sections mentioned during the discussion and in the Floor Leader’s motion is hereby overridden. Thank you, colleagues. We now proceed to Item No. 17, Miscellaneous Business, and the floor is open.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Marissa Renee Flores: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize, colleagues—I know you all dread this part because I always want to speak—but it is important. Today’s actions require historical context and allow the public to understand where we are in our current economy. I am not here to lecture or assign blame; I am here to tell a factual story about promise, failure, consequences, and responsibility. In 1976, our leaders entered into the Covenant to establish the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in political union with the United States of America. The Covenant granted U.S. citizenship to our people, preserved our right to local self-government, and committed the United States to assist in our economic advancement and political stability. It was a partnership. In 1978, our Constitution took effect, establishing Article 2: Legislative Authority; Article 3: Executive Authority; and Article 4: Judicial Independence. Checks and balances were built to protect the people, and accountability was embedded by design. But institutions function only when leadership upholds them. For decades, tourism powered prosperity across Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, with visitor arrivals approaching 500,000 annually before the pandemic. Businesses expanded, employment was strong, and government revenues were stable. Yet, even during periods of growth, warning signs emerged: weak internal controls, procurement irregularities, unreconciled accounts, and non-compliance with federal grant

requirements. These were recurring deficiencies, not isolated incidents. When the same issues appear year after year, it is not oversight—it is systemic failure. Systems fail when leadership fails to correct them. In 2008, Congress enacted the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008, federalizing CNMI immigration. Congress cited serious concerns: labor exploitation, human trafficking, wage violations, and weak enforcement mechanisms. These concerns were examined in hearings before the United States Senate and the U.S. House. Reform was necessary where abuse occurred, but context matters. Labor violations, human trafficking, and wage theft occur across the United States. The difference in the CNMI was scale, political leverage, and economic impact. Unlike the states, where reform strengthens enforcement, in the CNMI reform transferred immigration authority without a fully co-designed transition aligned with our economic realities. At the time, our garment industry competed directly with mainland textile interests under national trade pressures. Federalization did not occur in isolation. Its consequences were significant: the garment industry collapsed, population declined, revenue contracted, and immigration authority permanently shifted to federal control. Governance weaknesses make external intervention easier to justify. This is not accusation; it is institutional reality. COVID did not create our weaknesses—it exposed them. In 2024, visitor arrivals were approximately 228,963—less than half of pre-pandemic levels. Tourism remains our primary economic driver. When tourism declines, jobs decline, revenue declines, confidence declines. Our population is now 43,000 and shrinking. Nearly half of residents report considering relocation due to economic uncertainty. These challenges are compounded by overreliance on a single industry, failure to diversify, repeated audit deficiencies, and weak fiscal discipline. These are leadership failures over time—not partisan failures. Our Delegate to Congress, Kimberly King-Hines, continues to engage federal agencies to strengthen economic flexibility and remove barriers. That advocacy is essential, but the Covenant envisioned partnership, not unilateral design. Federal policy must reflect local economic realities. Local governance must meet federal standards of compliance and transparency. Without alignment, imbalance occurs—and in a small island economy, imbalance is magnified. Plainly: if audits are late, oversight hearings absent, or repeat findings persist, that is a legislative failure. If internal controls remain weak and corrective actions stall, that is an executive failure. If procurement rules are bypassed and grants poorly monitored, that is an administrative failure. If policies are implemented without calibration to our economic structure, unintended harm follows. Accountability is governance, not hostility. We must institutionalize reform: Statutory audit deadlines within six months of fiscal year close, mandatory corrective action plans tied to appropriations, public quarterly reporting on audit status, centralized procurement compliance review, independent internal audit units within major departments, enforceable penalties for unresolved repeat findings, and formal federal-local policy coordination mechanisms. Repeat findings must trigger consequences; otherwise, failure becomes institutionalized. Tourism recovery is necessary but insufficient. An economy dependent on a single external sector is structurally vulnerable. This is not criticism; this is economic reality. We must pursue deliberate diversification into regional logistics and transshipment, digital and remote professional services, renewable energy, workforce training, alignment with emerging industries, and education and research partnerships. These are ongoing discussions with federal counterparts regarding economic transition, workforce flexibility, infrastructure modernization, and regulatory alignment. Collaboration reflects the spirit of the Covenant, but collaboration without urgency becomes delay. Time is not neutral—every year of stagnation means more outward migration, reduced investor confidence, and shrinking workforce capacity. Diversification must move from discussion to implementation, from concept to statute, from meetings to measurable milestones. Failure to

diversify is costly. Diversification is survival. The story of 1976 was about courage. The story of the last decade includes warning signs we did not adequately correct. But the story of this decade can be one of reform. We cannot blame the system without acknowledging that leaders operate it. When leadership fails to correct known deficiencies, decline becomes predictable. Now is the moment to choose discipline over denial, reform over rhetoric, performance over promise. If we do, the Covenant partnership strengthens, federal trust improves, investments return, and families stay. To those watching overseas, to our sons and daughters studying abroad, and to families who left seeking stability, we are building something worthy of your return—not temporary recovery, not short-term fixes—but structural reform, transparent governance, and real opportunity. Let us build a Commonwealth where our people believe their best future is right here at home, where returning is not a sacrifice but a smart, stable, and hopeful decision. That is the story we want for our Marianas moving forward. Our Marianas deserve nothing less than reform and real opportunity so they can come home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I yield my time.

The Chair recognized Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino, Jr.

Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to share a quick note. Regarding the funding for the Marianas Visitors Authority, if they are listening, I would like to encourage them to also focus on the trash around the island. Parks and Recreation, together with Chairman John Paul Sablan and myself, do a lot of the cleaning within our districts—and sometimes beyond. I want to thank our colleague, Representative Joseph Flores, for assisting us in As Gonno and from Coral Ocean Point up to the intersection of Katmelo. There was a significant amount of trash. While promoting the beauty of our island is important—and many of us are concerned with seabed mining—I believe we should also focus on the amount of trash present. I am not certain whether this should be addressed through schools, but when you cut the grass and look around, you see plastics, bottles, betel nut spit bottles, and other waste. I understand that the Governor’s rapid beautification team focuses on tourist sites, particularly areas leading to hotels or major attractions. I propose that, Mr. Speaker, we dedicate one or two days a month to a pilot cleanup initiative. We could start with Precinct 2, which is one of the most beautiful villages on the island. Everyone can chip in there, and it could serve as a model that other precincts can follow. Chairman John Paul Sablan and I are always eager to help any precinct. We will be there to support this effort. Thank you.

There being no further discussion on the floor, the Chair proceeded to Item No. 18, Announcements, and recognized Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to provide an update, colleagues, on my initiative, “Paint the Marianas.” I have shared this initiative with you all and with the media. First, I would like to thank Full Circle Saipan for donating \$30,000 worth of paint. Collaborating with the Marianas Visitors Authority (MVA) was excellent timing, as I was unsure how I would manage the delivery of the paint. They have a branding code that is “far from ordinary,” so this collaboration provided a great platform to work with. Community groups—including churches, clubs, and schools—must apply, as the MVA cannot handle this effort alone. This is an opportunity to showcase our island, similar to the point raised by our colleague,

Representative Daniel Aquino, regarding trash cleanup. Additionally, there is an airline, in coordination with the MVA, that is scheduled to do a site visit in April. I encourage all precincts to have their community groups apply. My staff will determine the amount of paint each group receives. We have a substantial supply, and more paint is on the way. Please submit your applications and participate. I like to use sports analogies—I am a coach, after all. When you run alone, it is tough. But when you run with a group, they support you, push you, set the pace, and hold you accountable. I am asking all of you to run with me—to run alongside the Marianas Visitors Authority—and help promote our island. While tourism is affected by external factors beyond our control, we can start initiatives like this so that when tourists visit, they see an island that we take pride in and care for. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues.

The Chair recognized Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino, Jr.

Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to add—when my *primo* wasn't here, I realized that I am surrounded by greatness. I have never experienced a legislative body where so many members are running for Governor and Lieutenant Governor. My *primos*, Representative Attao is running for Governor, and Mr. Speaker is running for Lieutenant Governor. I also forgot to mention our mayoral candidates: Representatives Joel Castro and Patrick San Nicolas. And, of course, our colleague running for Senate. I just wanted to acknowledge that. Thank you so much.

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Marissa Renee Flores: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to share an announcement. There will be a proclamation signing for the 2026 Developmental Disability Awareness Month at the Tiger Room, Saipan Resort, on Monday, March 2, 2026, from 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Adjacent to that, across the street, there will also be a proclamation signing for International Women's Day on March 2, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. I hope to see all the men there to support the women. Thank you.

There being no further discussion on the floor, the Chair proceeded to Adjournment and recognized the Floor Leader.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Floor Leader Marissa Renee Flores: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hereby move to adjourn subject to the call of the Chair. So move.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to adjourn was carried by voice vote. There was no "nay" vote.

The House adjourned at 12:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenalyn T. Santos
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:****THIRD LEGISLATIVE DAY:**

H. L. B. No. 24-42: To amend the Wedding Cake Mountain Wildlife Conservation Area, to authorize the Mayor of Rota to plan, construct, and maintain a pedestrian pathway at Wedding Cake Mountain and access to the Grotto, and to initiate actions necessary to qualify for federal grants, and for other purposes. REP. JULIE M. A. OGO of Rota, Precinct 7 (for herself) Introduced on January 16, 2026.

H. L. B. No. 24-43: To establish a docking and watercraft fee for derby event participants utilizing the West and East Docks on Rota; to include vessels, jet skis, kayaks, and canoes; to exempt bona fide Rota residents and educational activities; to provide penalties for violations; and to allocate collected revenues for conservation and community programs. REP. JULIE M. A. OGO of Rota, Precinct 7 (for herself) Introduced on January 16, 2026.

H. L. B. No. 24-44: To amend Title 10, Division 1, Chapter 12 (Rota Casino Act of 2007) of the Commonwealth Code to: (1) establish a clear separation between the investigative and compliance functions of the Rota Casino Gaming RCGC (RCGC) and the adjudicatory/decision- making functions of the Commissioners; (2) establish an Investigations and Enforcement Division under the Executive Director; (3) authorize the procurement of qualified independent third-party investigative and professional services for criminal and financial due diligence of casino license applicants and related persons; (4) establish a Casino Regulatory Fee and a dedicated regulatory fund/account to provide stable annual funding for regulatory operations, including enforcement and monitoring; (5) strengthen conflicts of interest, disclosure, and recusal requirements for Commissioners; and for other purposes. REP. JULIE M. A. OGO of Rota, Precinct 7 (for herself) Introduced on January 16, 2026.

Appearance of Measures introduced on the House Floor during House Session on February 9, 2026:

H. B. NO. 24-89: To appropriate \$300,000.00 of the dividends collected by the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority (CEDA) from the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) to fund infrastructure projects in the Second Senatorial District. REP. PATRICK H. SAN NICOLAS of Tinian, Precinct 6 (for himself) Introduced on February 9, 2026. Referred to: House Committee on Ways and Means on February 9, 2026.

H. B. NO. 24-90: To mandate the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation to change the power, water, and wastewater rates for the Commonwealth Ports Authority to the commercial utility rate; and for other purposes. REP. ELIAS J. M. RANGAMAR of Saipan, Precinct 3 (for himself) Introduced on February 9, 2026. Referred to: House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and to the House Committee on Ways and Means on February 9, 2026.

H. B. NO. 24-91: To appropriate \$300,000.00 of the dividends collected by the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority (CEDA) from the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) to fund infrastructure projects in the First Senatorial District. REP. JULIE M. A. OGO of Rota, Precinct 7 (for herself) Introduced on February 9, 2026. Referred to: House Committee on Ways and Means on February 9, 2026.

H. B. NO. 24-92: To appropriate \$63,000.00 from Schedule A of Public Law 24-20 that was vetoed for the Soil and Water Conservation Districts; and for other purposes. REP. PATRICK H. SAN NICOLAS of Tinian, Precinct 6 (for

himself) Introduced on February 9, 2026. Referred to: House Committee on Ways and Means and to the House Committee on Natural Resources on February 9, 2026.

H. B. NO. 24-93: To amend 4CMC § 5611 to allow for the issuance of two-year business licenses and to require the Department of Commerce and the Department of Finance to jointly promulgate implementing rules and regulations. REP. DANIEL I. AQUINO JR. of Saipan, Precinct 2 (for himself, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada, Vincent R. Aldan, Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Thomas J. DLC. Manglona, Malcolm J. Omar, Raymond U. Palacios, Elias J.M. Rangamar, John Paul P. Sablan, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) Introduced on February 9, 2026. Referred to: House Committee on Commerce on February 9, 2026.

H. B. NO. 24-94: To amend the punishment for the crime of vandalism to include the option of confinement. REP. MARISSA R. FLORES of Saipan, Precinct 3 (for herself) Introduced on February 9, 2026. Referred to: House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations on February 9, 2026

H. B. NO. 24-95: To enhance economic opportunities for small businesses and local farmers by establishing new gross revenue tax exemptions, clarifying export treatment, simplifying tax administration in the CNMI; providing for phased implementation to ensure administrative feasibility and fiscal stability; and for other purposes. REP. THOMAS J. DLC. MANGLONA of Saipan, Precinct 5 (for himself) Introduced on February 9, 2026. Referred to: House Committee on Ways and Means on February 9, 2026.

H. L. B. NO. 24-46: To re-appropriate the fund balance of \$50,000.00 under Saipan Local Law 22-16 (Project Code 2001E); and for other purposes. REP. ANGELO A. CAMACHO and REP. THOMAS J. DLC. MANGLONA of Saipan, Precinct 5 (for themselves) Introduced on February 9, 2026.