

THE HOUSE
FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
FIRST REGULAR SESSION, 1984

FIRST DAY

Monday, January 9, 1984

In accordance with the provisions of Section III of Public Law 3-96, of the Constitution of the Northern Mariana Islands, the House of the Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature, First Regular Session, 1984, was called to order at 10:16 a.m., Monday, January 9, 1984, in the House Chamber, Susupe, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Honorable Benigno R. Fitial, presided.

Speaker Fitial: Pursuant to Section III of Public Law 3-96 of the Constitution of the Northern Mariana Islands, I would like to call to order the First Session of the House of the Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature. At this time, I respectfully request Monsignor Tomas Camacho to deliver the invocation, and I respectfully request that everybody in this Chamber rise, please.

Everybody rose, and Monsignor Tomas Camacho delivered the invocation.

"O God, the World is in Turmoil and our People in the Northern Marianas is having its share of it. We have barely begun this new year and already we have encountered numerous tragedies.

Our tradition and cultural heritage are undergoing rapid changes that at times confused the citizens of these islands.

It is therefore very fitting that we come to you this morning to ask for your special assistance and guidance for these Honorable Gentlemen who are going to be in the position to solve some of the problems we presently are experiencing.

We ask you to enlighten their minds so that they can readily see the problems that afflict our people and islands. We beg you to take away animosity and to soften their hearts so that they can work in harmony for the common good, but above all we implore you to strengthen their will so that they may never lose sight of the goals they have set out to do for their constituents.

We ask you this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, for ever and ever.

In the Name of the Father

Speaker Fitial: Thank you very much Monsignor Camacho. Please be seated. At this time, I would ask the Temporary Clerk to call the roll by election districts.

The Temporary Clerk called the roll, as follows, and all the incumbent representatives and representatives-elect responded to their roll call respectively:

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Representative Pedro R. Guerrero seconded the motion.

Speaker Fitial: Mr. Temporary Clerk, please number the resolution just introduced by Representative Gregorio Sablan, House Resolution No. 1.

Representative Francisco Cabrera: Mr. Speaker, point of clarification.

Speaker Fitial: Please state your point of clarification, Representative Cabrera.

Representative Francisco Cabrera: Mr. Speaker, the House Rules that has just been introduced, is this House Rules a permanent House Rules for the Fourth Commonwealth Legislature, or is this an interim rules for the Fourth Commonwealth Legislature.

Representative Gregorio Sablan: Mr. Speaker, my motion is the introduction of a house resolution, adopting the Rules of the House of Representative of the Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature and for other purposes.

Speaker Fitial: I will entertain a motion for the adoption of such house rules.

Representative Pedro Guerrero seconded the motion.

Speaker Fitial: Discussion on the motion?

Representative Hocog: Ready, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Fitial: Mr. Temporary Clerk, please call the roll for voting purposes.

The Temporary Clerk called the roll for voting purposes, as follows, and Representatives-elect responded to their roll call respectively:

Representative Jose C. Cabrera
 Representative Francisco T. Cabrera
 Representative Ignacio DLG. Demapan
 Representative Juan DLG. Demapan
 Representative Benigno R. Fitial
 Representative Juan T. Guerrero
 Representative Pedro R. Guerrero
 Representative Victor B. Hocog
 Representative Jose R. Lifoifoi
 Representative Pedro T. Nakatsukasa
 Representative Benigno M. Sablan
 Representative Gregorio C. Sablan
 Representative Vicente M. Sablan
 Representative Juan S. Torres
 Representative Juan B. Tudela

Speaker Fitial: The motion to adopt the House Rules is hereby adopted.

Representative Gregorio Sablan: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Chair that we move to the next item of business, and I move for the nomination for the office of the speaker for the Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature be open.

Representative Nakatsukasa seconded the motion.

Speaker Fitial: It has been moved and seconded that we move to the next order of business, and that nomination for the office of the speakership is open. Before I do any recognition, any discussion on the motion?

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No discussion on the motion, and the motion carried by voice vote.

Representative Nakatsukasa: Mr. Speaker, I am directed by unanimous vote of the Democratic Party to present for the election of the office of the speaker for the House of Representatives to the Fourth Commonwealth Legislature, the name of the Honorable Vicente M. Sablan, the Representative from election precinct number 2.

Representative Hocog seconded the nomination.

Speaker Fitial: The Honorable Vicente M. Sablan has been nominated for the office of the speaker to the Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature. I now recognize Representative Juan Torres.

Representative Torres: Mr. Speaker, I would like to be given the honor to nominate Benigno R. Fitial for the position of the speakership for the Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

Speaker Fitial: Representative Benigno R. Fitial has been nominated.

Representative Gregorio Sablan: Mr. Speaker, I move that we close the nomination for the office of the speaker.

Representative Nakatsukasa seconded the motion.

Speaker Fitial: It has been moved and seconded that the nomination for the speakership be closed.

The motion carried by voice vote.

Speaker Fitial: Pursuant to Section III of Public Law 3-96 passed since, states secret balloting. I will now ask the Temporary Clerk with the assistance of the Journal Clerk to pass out papers to each congressmen.

The Temporary Clerk counted the ballots and announced the results to the members as follows: Eight votes for Representative Vicente M. Sablan and seven votes for Representative Benigno R. Fitial.

(Applause)

Speaker Fitial: At this time I will like to offer my congratulations to our new Speaker of the House of Representatives, Fourth Commonwealth Legislature, the Honorable Ben M. Sablan, and ask him to take over the presidings.

(Applause)

Representative Gregorio Sablan: Mr. Speaker, I move that the nomination for the office of vice speaker be conducted at this time.

Speaker Sablan: If I may, I would like to address the House at this time, with your permission.

Fellow Congressmen and Honored Guests. First, let me express my deep appreciation for the trust and confidence you have shown by selecting me to be your Speaker for the Fourth Commonwealth Legislature. This is a humbling honor and a responsibility I take very seriously. You can be assured that I will work conscientiously throughout my term of office to maintain an efficient and productive House, serving the needs and interests of the People of the Commonwealth as a whole.

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In this effort, I will need your continued cooperation, assistance and support. But as I look around me today, I do not just see fourteen Congressmen, Republican and Democrat, I see fourteen individuals with reputations as hard workers. So I am confident each and every one of you will pitch in wholeheartedly to address the major tasks at hand.

A full agenda awaits us as Representatives in the Fourth Legislature. It is appropriate at this time to touch briefly on a few of the more important issues.

First, we must enact Legislation to provide for a convention to propose amendments to the Commonwealth Constitution, as required by Article XVIII, Section 2 of the Constitution and mandated by 76% of the voters in the recent general election. We must provide for the election of delegates on a non-partisan basis and for the conduct of the convention. We must ensure that the convention finishes its work early, so that the voters can properly study and consider the proposed amendments. We also should not leave the convention to stand in isolation, but should provide a mechanism of communication and coordination between the convention and the Legislature, so as to ease the ratification of proposed amendments.

Second, we must establish a task force to discuss with the U.S. Government the level of future U.S. Financial Assistance and other aspects of the Federal-Commonwealth relationship, as envisaged by Article VII and Section 902 of the Covenant. We are now in the final year of the initial seven year period of Covenant Funding.

Third, we must design a local tax structure that satisfies both the Federal Government's legitimate concern that the Commonwealth have fair, broadly based taxes leading to self-sufficiency in Government operations, and the Commonwealth's need for development incentives, ease of administration, and adequate revenues. How well we do in this regard will have significant impact on the tenor of our relations with the U.S. Government in general, affecting, in turn, such things as funding levels, treatment under Federal Regulations, and the ultimate outcome of the mirror-image IRC issue.

Fourth, we must provide for a balance economic growth in the Commonwealth. We must identify and utilize appropriate stimulants and incentives to those industries that will contribute to specific development objectives, with the fewest negative effects. We need to provide more opportunities for local residents to establish their own businesses and more technical training and assistance to help ensure that they succeed in those businesses. We must promote the full spectrum of vocations, developing more and more reliable, highly skilled, indigenous tradesmen, technicians, craftsmen and managers. We must always remember that, ultimately, our most precious resource is our people. Additionally, major infrastructure needs such as roads, schools, water lines, harbor development, and extension of utilities to rural areas require CIP funding. Improved Agriculture Programs are needed to better coordinate production, protect farmers from the vagary of weather and market conditions, and to reduce the costs of production. We need to upgrade programs to prevent crime and strengthen the pride, professionalism, and skills of our law enforcement personnel. We need to improve the quality of education. We need to tighten controls on procurement, contracting, and finances while improving efficiency and public service and convenient. We need to establish a legal framework for open government. We need to improve governmental enforcement of regulatory requirements.

The subjects I have cited represent only a fraction of the work we face. It is clear that we can only meet our obligations to the People of the Commonwealth by adopting a Modus Operandi of open mindedness and cooperation.

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I hardly work for a team in this House. I support both Republican and Democratic Parties. I support one another, for being so generous, and I'll work together with the rest of our colleagues in this House for the benefits and for the betterment of our Commonwealth, I thank you.

(Applause)

Speaker Sablan: The next point of order in our agenda is the nomination for the Floor Leader.

Representative Hocog: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this honor to nominate Representative Pedro T. Nakatsukasa from election precinct number 1, to be seated in the office of the Floor Leader.

Representative Tudela seconded the motion.

Representative Ignacio Demapan: Mr. Speaker, I am honored to nominate Representative Jose Lifoifoi for the seat of the Floor Leader.

The motion seconded by Representative Francisco Cabrera.

The Temporary Clerk counted the ballots and announced the results to the members as follows: eight votes for Pedro T. Nakatsukasa, and seven votes for Jose R. Lifoifoi.

(Applause)

Speaker Sablan: The next item on our agenda is the nomination for the Office of the Clerk.

Representative Juan Guerrero: Mr. Speaker, I would like to nominate Protem Clerk, Mr. Daniel Quitugua.

Representative Pedro Guerrero seconded the nomination.

The Temporary Clerk with the assistance of the Journal Clerk passed the papers for secret balloting.

Temporary Clerk: It's rather weird that I read my own name.

The Temporary Clerk counted the ballots and announced the results to the members as follows: twelve votes for Daniel Quitugua, two votes for Herbert Rosario.

(Applause)

Speaker Sablan: Welcome Dan. The next item on our agenda is the appointment of the sergeant-at-arms. At this time, it is my pleasure pursuant to Rule I Section 2C, that I hereby appoint Pedro Castro, from San Antonio, to be the Sergeant-At-Arms of this House.

(Applause)

Speaker Sablan: The next item in our agenda is the election of Party Officers.

Representative Francisco Cabrera: Mr. Speaker, under item 9 of our order of business, I am honored to announce that we have selected Benigno R. Fitial to be our Minority Leader.

(Applause)

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Representative Gregorio Sablan: The motion for the election of the Office of Vice Speaker by acclamation is contrary to Section II, Subsection B of the Rules and Procedures we have adopted earlier, today. Therefore, I move that the nomination for the office of the vice speaker be close.

Representative Juan Guerrero seconded the motion.

Speaker Sablan: The nomination has been moved and seconded. The only nomination for the seat of the vice speaker is Mr. Juan B. Tudela.

Representative Fitial: Point of clarification, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the Honorable Greg Sablan to be more specify as to which section of the rule is he referring to, regarding election by acclamation.

Representative Gregorio Sablan: Section II, Subsection B, reads "the Speaker, Vice Speaker, Floor Leader, and the Clerk be elected by plurality vote of the House," etc Plurality vote, Mr. Speaker, does not allow voting by acclamation.

Representative Fitial: Mr. Speaker, this might rather sound funny, but when there is but one candidate for a particular office, we can, not resolve, but bypass the voting by plurality.

Representative Gregorio Sablan: Mr. Speaker, I have no objection to the acclamation.

Speaker Sablan: At this time, I would like to ask the Temporary Clerk to provide the roll call for the voting of the vice speaker.

The Temporary Clerk called the roll, and the following members responded to their roll call respectively:

Representative Jose Cabrera
Representative Francisco Cabrera
Representative Ignacio Demapan
Representative Juan Demapan
Representative Benigno Fitial

Representative Fitial: Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise a point of order. I think we are conducting an illegal election. Pursuant to Public Law 3-96, the Law calls for secret balloting. I do not know why we are calling out the roll.

Representative Nakatsukasa: Point of order. Isn't it the consensus of this House to authorize the election by acclamation?

Speaker Sablan: I would like to point out that Public Law 3-96 has just been activated into law and most of the members are not aware of such passage. Now, I will like to ask the Temporary Clerk to distribute the papers for secret balloting.

The Temporary Clerk counted the ballots and announced the results to the members as follows: Juan B. Tudela, nine votes, Juan Demapan, three votes, Pedro Nakatsukasa, one vote, and Francisco Cabrera, one vote.

(Applause)

Vice Speaker Tudela: Thank you Mr. Speaker, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen. It is of great pleasure and honor for me to take this opportunity, for the vote of confidence, in giving me the Vice Chairman, a Republican, but

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At this critical juncture in the History of our Commonwealth, it is imperative that all parties, both public and private, set aside parochial interests and pursue the common ground that will result in "The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number."

It is a Political reality that the Republican Party controls the Senate and the Governor's Office. But we can ill-afford to put the affairs of the Commonwealth on hold while the two Political Parties jockey for position in the '85 elections. Political posturing is no substitute for public policy. I am convinced, not only that bipartisan cooperation is possible, but that, in the end, the voters will judge us more for our performance in this Legislature than for our party affiliation.

My overriding objective as Speaker, therefore, will be to see to it that the actions of the Body reflects a synthesis of the viewpoints and concerns of young and old, male and female, businessmen, poor, robust and infirm, all the various ethnic groups in short, all the parts of our population. In closing, I suggest that "Unity for the Common Good" should be our guiding theme. Thank you.

(Applause)

Speaker Sablan: I would now like to entertain the next item of our agenda.

Representative Gregorio Sablan: Mr. Speaker, I move for the previous motion, that the nomination for the office of the vice speaker be open.

Representative Fitjal seconded the motion.

Speaker Sablan: The Office of the vice speaker is now open for nomination.

Representative Gregorio Sablan: Mr. Speaker, it is my great honor and delight that I nominate the Honorable Juan B. Tudela, Representative of election precinct number 3 for the office of vice speaker.

Representative Juan Guerrero seconded the motion.

Representative Francisco Cabrera: I would like to ask the Honorable of such motion to withdraw his motion so that I will further nominate Mr. Juan B. Tudela for the seat of the vice speaker, by acclamation.

Representative Gregorio Sablan: I have no objection to the acclamation motion. I hereby second his motion that Representative Juan B. Tudela be nominated and elected to the office of the vice speaker by acclamation.

Representative Fitjal: I would like to ask the Honorable Sablan to withdraw his motion so that we can accomplish what we are trying to do here.

Speaker Sablan: Representative Sablan, can you kindly withdraw your motion.

Representative Gregorio Sablan: Mr. Speaker, I move for a short recess.

Representative Nakatsukasa: The motion raised by the Republican Representative from Tinian, if I understand him correctly, Representative Greg Sablan does not need to withdraw his motion in order to nominate Congressman Juan B. Tudela, by acclamation. At this point and time I don't see any difference.

Speaker Sablan: Can we now close the nomination?

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Speaker Sablan: The next item of our agenda is the notification of the Senate and Governor. I hereby, appoint Representative Juan B. Tudela, and Pedro Guerrero to notify the Senate that the House is fully organize and ready to transact business. For the notification to the Governor, I appoint Representatives Gregorio Sablan and Victor Hocog to notify the Governor that the House is ready for business and is fully organize.

Representative Gregorio Sablan: I move that the House stand on recess until we return from our assignments.

Representative Fitial seconded the motion, and the motion carried without objection.

The House recessed at 10:55 a.m..

The House reconvened at 11:52 a.m..

Representative Gregorio Sablan: The Governor of the Northern Marianas Commonwealth has been informed that the House is fully organized and ready to transact business. The Governor has requested that he be present in our session, today, and give us a brief remark. I ask the Chair to order the Sergeant-At-Arms, to please escort the Governor to the Floor Chamber.

Speaker Sablan: The Sergeant-At-Arms is hereby requested to escort the Governor to the Chamber. The Chair is please to present the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Governor to this Chamber. May I now ask the Governor to present his message to the House.

Governor Tenorio: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Members of the House of Representatives, Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature, distinguish guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is indeed a privilege and honor to be here to witness this newly elected Legislators who has been sworn into the House of Representatives. As a former member of the First and Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature, I understand the problems of being a Legislator. Many of your decisions may be criticize by the media and by certain segment of our community. The oath of office which you have subscribed require that you will report and defend the Constitution and the Law of the Commonwealth. In passing legislation, you will, of course, be guided by what is best for the People in the Commonwealth, and not what will benefit a special interest group.

I am also very please to inform this Honorable Body that this morning I have the privilege to swear-in the Honorable Froilan C. Tenorio, who is Tenorio, as our representative to the United States.

I am very please to extend my sincere congratulations and best wishes to each and everyone of you during your term of office. I will do my best to work closely with you to deliberate and pass needed legislation. My door is always open and welcomes to seat with you, and my staff, to discuss matter of mutual interest. Again, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation and congratulations to everyone of you, this morning.

(Applause)

Speaker Sablan: May I ask Representative Juan Tudela to report on his mission to the Senate.

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Vice Speaker Tudela: Mr. Speaker, the Senate at this point of time is still in recess and we have not notify them of our action.

Speaker Sablan: Communications, any communications? If not, at this time, the Chair would like to recognize any statements from the members.

Representative Ignacio Demapan: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I am honored and please to extend my personal congratulation to you as the Speaker of the Fourth Commonwealth Legislature, and also, I would like my fellow colleagues to recognize our distinguish guests this morning, thank you.

Representative Hocog: As we all gathered here today, let me say that I am preciously enthuse by your presence of this solemn occasion. We have just witnessed the formulation of the Fourth Commonwealth Legislature. Briefly, I would like to share my feelings and ambitions. I visualize two political composition in this Body, but despite this fact, I have with me my heartfelt confidence to say at this very moment that I visualize no Democrats nor Republicans, but seeing only hard working individuals. To cherish, to assure, the commitments, all the commitments to the interest of the People of the Northern Marianas. As a Representative, Mr. Speaker, in this Fourth Legislature, and from the warm Island of Rota, my assurance to my Honorable Colleagues, that they would not visualize my presence in this Honorable Body as just a Congressman, or a Representative from Rota, but a Representative to the interest of the people of the Commonwealth. On top of this, feelings and ambitions, again let me, let us not allow, our geographical boundaries or political differences to interfere with out mission in this Body. That is, the mission to protect and pursue the bigger commitments to our constituents. In this working relationship, Mr. Speaker, we can be assured to big success and prosperity to our people, and by this, I pledge to do my support to each one of you, cooperate with you, in this Fourth Commonwealth Legislature. I cooperate Para Paireri na setvicio, and for the unity among ourselves. Mr. Speaker, my fellow Honorable Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, thank you.

(Applause)

Speaker Sablan: Let us now go on to our next item in the agenda, Announcements. Pursuant to House Rule 7, Section 7a, the Chair is please to announce the following Chairmanship of the House Standing Committees:

Committee on Appropriations: Representative Juan Guerrero, Chairman
Representative Gregorio Sablan, Vice
Chairman

Committee on Health, Education and Welfare:
Representative Victor Hocog, Chairman
Representative Juan Tudela, Vice Chairman

Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations:
Representative Benigno Sablan, Chairman
Representative Pedro Nakatsukasa, Vice
Chairman

Committee on Resources and Development:
Representative Pedro Guerrero, Chairman
Representative Benigno Sablan, Vice
Chairman

Committee on Federal Programs:
Representative Gregorio Sablan, Chairman

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Representative Juan Guerrero, Vice
Chairman

Committee on War Claims and Federal Land Taking:

Representative Gregorio Sablan, Chairman

Representative Victor Hocog, Vice
Chairman

Representative Gregorio Sablan: The House Leadership Committee will meet in the Speaker's Chamber immediately after this session, Mr. Speaker.

Representative Nakatsukasa: I move that the House adjourns subject to the call of the Chair.

Representative Gregorio Sablan seconded the motion, and the motion carried without objection.

The House adjourned at 12:04 noon.

Respectfully submitted

Daniel Quitugua
House Clerk

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Election District No. 1:

Representative Juan DLG. Demapan
 Representative Juan T. Guerrero
 Representative Pedro T. Nakatsukasa

Election District No. 2:

Representative Ignacio DLG. Demapan
 Representative Gregorio C. Sablan
 Representative Vicente M. Sablan

Election District No. 3:

Representative Jose C. Cabrera
 Representative Benigno R. Fitial
 Representative Pedro R. Guerrero
 Representative Juan S. Torres
 Representative Juan B. Tudela

Election District No. 4:

Representative Jose R. Lifoifoi
 Representative Benigno M. Sablan

Election District No. 5:

Representative Francisco T. Cabrera

Election District No. 6:

Representative Victor B. Hocog

Speaker Fitial: Thank you, Mr. Temporary Clerk. The next item on the agenda is the administering of the oath of office. May I ask the Honorable Chief Judge Robert Hefner to administer the oath of office to all members present.

The Honorable Robert Hefner administer the oath, and He addressed the members-elect as follows:

"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 to the best of my ability, so Help Me God."

(Applause)

Speaker Fitial: Thank you, Honorable Chief Judge Hefner. At this time I would like to recognize the Honorable Gregorio C. Sablan to effectuate the motion for the adoption of the House Rules.

Representative Gregorio Sablan: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce a house resolution adopting the Rules of the House of Representative of the Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature, and for other purposes. I ask the Temporary Clerk to kindly number the resolution, resolution number one. Copies are being distributed to members, right now.