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THE SENATE TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE



SENATE JOURNAL

FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION – 2025

SJ 24-08

First Day

Monday, July 14, 2025

In compliance with the Open Government Act, Senate President, Dennis C. Mendiola, issued a session call on July 9, 2025, that the Senate of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature will convene this open and public session. The notice, the official session call, and the session agenda was filed in the Office of the Senate Clerk; released to the media; and posted at the Entrance Halls of the Office of the Governor, the Senate and the House of Representatives, posted on the Commonwealth Legislature's website at www.cnmileg.net

The Honorable Dennis C. Mendiola, President of the Senate, presided.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: To our viewing public, to our community watching in the gallery, good afternoon. I hereby call this First Day, Fourth Special Session to order. Today is July 14, 2025, and the time is 1:30 p.m., and we are here at the Senate Chamber, the Honorable Vice Speaker Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building here in Capitol Hill. Before we proceed, may I ask everybody to please put their mobile devices on silent mode or switch them off. Today's session is being streamed live on Channel 23 Cable TV, our Senate YouTube channel and our Legislature's Facebook page. Before we proceed, may I ask everybody to please stand for a moment of silence?

A moment of silent prayer was observed.

Thank you. Clerk, please call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	<i>Presente</i> (Present)
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent/Excused
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Estague ha'</i> (Here)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Here
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Gaige</i> (Here)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Here
Senator Corina L. Magofna	<i>Presente</i> (Present)
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Present
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Here

CLERK: Mr. President, eight (8) members are present, one (1) absent.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk, With eight (8) members present, we have the necessary numbers to proceed with today's session. Let the record reflect that Senator Calvo is hereby excused for today's session. Before we move further, allow me to recognize some of our Senate support staff, our LB staff. We got Senate Clerk Dolores Bermudes; we got our Legal Counsel Antonette Villagomez; we got our Senior Legislative Assistant, Jolyn Tagabuel; We got our Journal Clerk, Ms. Baybie Dee, helping us today; we got our IT Assistant, Mr. Delbert Camacho; we got our Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Benjamin Terlaje; we got our Youth Congress Coordinator, Mr. LJ Castro. Welcome, LB team! Before we move further, Floor Leader? Short recess.

The Senate recessed at 1:33 p.m.

RECESS

The Senate reconvened at 1:34 p.m.

We now rise back to session. Public Comments.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Before we proceed, according to our Rules, anyone wishing to make a public comment, please limit your comments to five minutes. You can submit your comments or testimony in writing to our Sergeant-at-Arms, if you wish to do so. Public Comments is now open.

Chester Hinds: Good afternoon. Thank you for having me. I am in support of the sexual assault bill, and I want to give public comment for that. So, I have been Chief of the Criminal Division of the Attorney General's Office for over about three and a half years now. During that time, I have helped in prosecuting sex assault and sex abuse of minor cases. And these cases, sex assault and sex abuse of minor are some of the hardest offenses to prosecute, primarily because these offenses are usually committed in private. There is often little or no corroborating evidence, and it is usually one person's word against another. The onus is on the Commonwealth to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that a defendant is guilty and the defendant is not required to prove innocence. That is why we wanted to update the Sexual Abuse of a Minor Statute to enable better prosecutions. These updates are not controversial, they are needed. This bill does not expand the prosecutor's power; it actually expands protections for minors. Another reason this bill is important and needed to be passed, is it will help victims and prosecutions not two years from now, not five years from now, but it can help now, today. You should know that our office gets calls about these types of cases every week. There are statistics in the findings and purpose, but those statistics do not reflect cases that have not made it to our office, or cases that we cannot even charge because our current laws do not allow for it. For example, if a 40-year-old person is dating a 16-year-old child and that 40-year-old person is not a household member or in a position of authority, I cannot charge that case automatically. Under the current statute, there is nothing that I can do. That person cannot be charged.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Sir, one second please. Whoever has their phone on, please switch it off. Thank you.

Chester Hinds: For example, if a 40-year-old person is dating a 16-year-old child, and that 40-year-old person is not a household member or in a position of authority, I cannot charge that case. Under the current statute, there is nothing that I can do. That person cannot be charged because under the old statute, the perpetrator had to be in a position of authority or a family member. The old bill does not protect our children from complete strangers. The bill that we are proposing now changes that, and also, we added Section 1314 in the bill. We also added 1314 Unlawful Exploitation and Voyeurism. This is absolutely needed. Section 1314 addresses issues that we could not before because it did not exist. Under this bill, we can now charge someone for being a peeping Tom. We could not before. We can now charge someone for recording someone without their consent. We could not before. We can now charge someone who releases a sex tape or pictures without consent. We could not before. And we can now charge someone for revenge porn. Someone who threatens an ex-partner with release of sex tapes or pictures in order to get revenge. We could not charge that before. Section 1314 addresses these issues that our law did not before. Again, this bill should be seen as a well needed update of the previous bill. The previous bill focused on children exposed to family members and people in positions of authority. We moved away from that because children these days are meeting people not only in schools or at family barbecues, but online and on social media. The previous bill does not account for the use of technology in our children and in our adults' lives. This bill does. So, I would like to say thank you to all of you, and I ask that you support this bill. I cannot urge you enough. This has been a long road. We have been trying to get this bill passed for a long time. We have the coalition here, DPS and DYS; and all I can say is that this is really important and I have been fighting for this for a long time. So, I urge that you support this, and I would like to say, thank you.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, sir. Can you please state your full name for the record? Thank you.

Chester Hinds: Yes. I am **Chester Hinds**, Chief Prosecutor at the Attorney General's Office.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Chester.

Chester Hinds: Thank you.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Anybody else wishing to make a statement? Please state your full name for the record.

Vivian Sablan: Vivian Sablan, Administrator for the Division of Youth Services.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you. Welcome.

Vivian Sablan: Good afternoon, Senate President Mendiola, members of the Senate, and thank you for the opportunity to be heard today. Again, my name is **Vivian T. Sablan**, Administrator for DYS. I am here to speak in support of House Bill 24-1, which seeks to strengthen protections for our children by updating our sexual offense laws, particularly those related to sexual abuse of minors. At the DCCA Division of Youth Services, we are responsible for safeguarding the welfare of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable our children. The data we see every day makes it clear this legislation is needed now more than ever. In Fiscal Year 2024, there were a total of 535 child

abuse and neglect cases across the CNMI; and to break that down, 509 of these cases were reported on Saipan, nine cases in Tinian, and 17 cases in Rota. Out of those, there were 93 sexual abuse cases on Saipan, five on Tinian, and four on Rota; for a total of 102 reports of sexual abuse of a minor in one given year. In addition, we received two reports of sexual assault involving two minors, one case of indecent exposure involving a child, and already in 2025, which is still about 90 days away from ending. As of June 30th, 2025, we have recorded the following: 87 sexual abuse cases on Saipan, two cases of child pornography, three cases of digital exploitation, three cases of indecent exposure, two grooming cases, three sexual assault cases involving minors, and one sexual harassment case. Tinian, although has reported 13 cases so far this fiscal year, there has been no report of sexual abuse. However, on Rota, we have two confirmed sexual abuse cases for this current fiscal year. These are not just numbers, these are children. These are children who may be known to us through family ties, friends, or they might be our next door neighbors, but regardless of where they are coming from, they are children who need us to step up and make our laws stronger, clearer, and more protective. House Bill 24-1 updates outdated provisions, includes new protections like banning sexual acts between students and those in positions of authority and introduces long overdue terms like grooming, voyeurism, and digital exploitation. These are the realities our children are facing today, and our laws must catch up. We cannot continue to respond with old tools to a growing problem. The passage of this bill shows our children that we know what is happening, but most importantly, that we are doing something about it. On behalf of the DCCA Division of Youth Services, I want to thank our partners who are also present in the room today and this Legislative body for leading this effort. We are committed to working closely with you as this bill moves forward, and to ensure that the safety, dignity, and future of our children remain a top priority. Thank you for your time and standing with the children and families of the CNMI.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, ma'am. Floor is still open. Please state your full name for the record.

Frannie Demapan: Good afternoon, members of the Senate. My name is **Frannie Demapan**, and I am an Assistant Attorney General with the Criminal Division. I, along with Chief Prosecutor Chester Hinds, handle some of the Commonwealth's most serious and sensitive cases involving sexual assault, sexual abuse of minors, child abuse, and felony level domestic violence cases. I am here today to express my strong support for House Bill 24-1, HS1, which proposes essential and long overdue revisions to our sexual assault and abuse statutes. These reforms are not merely symbolic, they are critical to our ability to prosecute dangerous offenders, protect vulnerable victims, and close glaring legal loopholes that have allowed too many cases to fall through the cracks. There are world real world impacts of outdated statutes. When DPS forwards a sexual assault case to our office, we as prosecutors must make a decision, do we accept or decline prosecution? All too often the answer is heartbreaking. We have declined cases, not because the victim was unwilling to participate, not because the parents refused to cooperate, and not because we lacked credible evidence of the abuse, but simply because our current statutes do not criminalize the conduct due to narrow definitions, outdated age thresholds, or statutory gaps that ignore power dynamics. I have personally sat in our office conference room across from victims and their families, some of them children, having to explain why we could not... why we could not file charges.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: You can take your time.

Frannie Demapan: These are painful conversations no prosecutor should have to initiate and no victim should have to endure. These legal gaps send a dangerous message to the community that certain forms of sexual abuse are not subject to prosecution in our jurisdiction. House Bill 24-1 reflects years of collaboration between the Attorney General's Office, DPS, DYS, Child Protective Services, Schools, thank you, the Sexual Assault Response Team, spearheaded by the coalition, healthcare professionals, survivors, and community members across all three islands. You will see that we have been very diligent before we have proposed this legislation before this body. This bill raises the age of protection from under 13 to under 15 with graduated age differences for offenders, up to age 21 and older, providing much needed clarity and broader protection. It criminalizes sexual misconduct by school employees and contractors. Finally, recognizing and prohibiting the abuse of authority within educational institutions. It introduces a comprehensive voyeurism statute addressing growing concerns about privacy violations, especially in the digital age, and that is something that the CNMI law currently fails to do. It clarifies key definitions like consent, sexual contact, and voyeurism to better reflect how these crimes actually occur in real life. And it strengthens sentencing and parole provisions for egregious acts, recognizing the lifelong harm that these offenses inflict on victims. No law is perfect. This bill is not perfect. But this bill is a critical and proactive step, one rooted in experience in numerous consultations and the realities we face on the front lines. It reflects what we have learned from failed prosecutions, survivor stories, and the legal limitations that have tied our hands for too long. This is not just about updating language in the code. It is about restoring faith in the justice system for survivors. It is about ensuring accountability for those who commit sexual violence, and it is about building a legal framework that finally reflects the values of protection, dignity, and justice for all. I respectfully urge this body to pass House Bill 24-1. It is thoughtful, responsive legislation that empowers law enforcement, prosecutors, and the community to better address sexual violence and safeguard our most vulnerable. Thank you.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, ma'am. Floor is still open. Please state your full name for the record.

Kiki Igitol Benjamin: Kiki Igitol Benjamin. Good afternoon, *hafa adai yan tirow*, Honorable Senate President and esteemed Senators of the 24th Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the presence of our dedicated champions gathered in the gallery today, including members of the Sexual Assault Response Team, representatives from the Office of the Attorney General, the Division of Youth Services, the Department of Public Safety, and the Northern Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, as well as our dedicated advocates and resilient survivors from our community who are joining us in person and virtually. Again, my name is Kiki Igitol Benjamin. I am the Associate Director at the Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. However, today I appear before you as a survivor of sexual abuse and sexual assault, and also as a passionate advocate for youth and all victims and survivors impacted by sexual abuse and sexual assault. I am here to express my strong support for House Bill 24-1, HS1, which seeks to update the statute regarding sexual abuse of minors, voyeurism, and unlawful exploitation. This bill is essential for enhancing the safety and wellbeing of our community. For nearly 20 years, I have had the privilege of working alongside survivors whose powerful narratives of pain and perseverance have

profoundly impacted and influenced me, and continues to guide the mission of the Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. One of the most rewarding aspects of our efforts at the Coalition is engaging with youth across the CNMI, on Saipan, Rota, and Tinian. Through our educational and outreach initiatives, we emphasize the importance of consent, personal boundaries, and both physical and emotional safety. We discuss personal values, the meaning of respect, and how to recognize and report instances of sexual assault and harassment. We also provide critical resources, promote self-empowerment, and peer advocacy. The other part of our job is also the heartbreaking aspect of our role. When we are working with children who step forward and courageously share their traumatic experiences of sexual abuse, we have witnessed countless emotional testimonies from young people, stories filled with pain that no child should ever have to endure. We have encountered many parents, guardians, and members of our community who are understandably frustrated, and in many cases, completely outraged that the current statute denies victims the justice they rightfully deserve. This issue stems from flaws, loopholes, and unclear language in the statute, established 24 years ago. It is evident that this legislation requires modernization. Each section of House Bill 24-1, HS1, reflects a thoughtful input from our youth, parents, advocates, first responders, and service providers across our islands on Saipan, Rota, and Tinian. This bill embodies many years of courageous dialogue and a commitment to transformative change. House Bill 24 -1, HS1, aims to enhance essential protections for our children and facilitate effective prosecutions. It is important to highlight that the current statute primarily addresses the vulnerabilities of children to family members and authority figures. However, as we know, our world has evolved. Children are now interacting with people not just in traditional settings like schools and community events, but also increasingly through online platforms and social media. The current law does not adequately account for the impacts of technology on the lives of both children and adults leaving critical gaps in protections. Your support for this bill is vital in safeguarding our youth and ensuring our laws reflect modern realities. As leaders and caring citizens, we carry significant responsibility to foster protective environments for our children, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable, and that we make it more so difficult for perpetrators to inflict further harm in our community. In light of the statistics that DYS had shared and the increasing reports of sexual abuse and assault, we urge you to ensure that such offensive behaviors and crimes will no longer be tolerated in our cherished CNMI. Therefore, Honorable Senators of the CMI, I respectfully urge you to pass House Bill 24-1, HS1, on your Order of Business set before you today. Thank you, *si Yu'us ma'ase, Ghilissow* for your unwavering leadership, dedication, and crucial work in our community.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, ma'am. Floor is still open. Please state your full name for the record.

Macy B. Tenorio: Good afternoon, *hafa adai yan tirow*. My name is **Macy B. Tenorio**, and I am the Executive Director of the Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. And I, along with my passionate colleagues, are here to support House Bill 24-1, HS1. And as you've heard from the amazing advocates that work at the Division of Youth Services, the Department of Public Safety, the Office of the Attorney General, and at the coalition, this has been a collaborative and collective effort spanning a number of years. We have worked so closely together, sometimes meeting weekly and meeting with every single person that we thought could provide input or that was important, most particularly our youth and parents and guardians to come up with this critical update to our sexual assault and sexual abuse statutes. And as you know, the

Coalition has spoken publicly many times in support of this bill, bringing voice, the often silenced voices of victims of sexual abuse and sexual assault. We are here again to urge you to support policy that reflects our shared commitment to our people here in the Commonwealth. As you know, again, we are here in support of this bill, so I am going to use my short brief time to address some of the concerns that we have heard about this bill. So first, there is concern over the impact of this bill on those that may be falsely accused. To be clear, this bill is about protecting children from predatory and harmful adults. Research shows that false reporting is at minimum two or 3% of cases, and at maximum 7%. This means that 93 to 97% of cases are substantiated. Additionally, data demonstrates that sexual assault and abuse crimes are vastly under-reported, and that Asians and Pacific Islanders our people, are among the least likely to report, and we can be here all day talking about all the reasons why that is. But it is also important to realize that policy makers and local leaders who focus on protecting a very small part of the population at the risk of allowing harm to come to hundreds of children in the CNMI are also an issue. Second, there is a concern that Section 1308, which addresses unlawful sexual acts against students is unnecessary and that it only targets a certain population or a certain age group. And again, let me be absolutely clear, it is never okay for a teacher, a school counselor, or any school official or employees to groom or sexually abuse a student. There is no such thing as a relationship between educators or people in power and children. It is critical that we focus our message and our action to the passage of this bill, that the role of adults in the lives of children should be one of protection from harm, not causing harm. And again, I think it is really critical for all of us in positions of power here in our Commonwealth to reflect on the reasons why sexual abuse and sexual assault continue to occur within our community. Are we truly a community of unity, family, and respect? Why are our children and other vulnerable populations, like people with disabilities, continuing to experience harm; and continuing to experience harm and unable to speak out and reach out for help? We continue to hear from many in our community that victims should report, victims need to speak out, victims need to reach out and talk to other people. Yet many victims do not feel that they can. And when many victims do, as you heard from the Office of the Attorney General and DYS and Kiki from the Coalition, that they are often met with judgment or laws that cannot provide the protection and support that they need and deserve. So again, this bill brings a critical update to our statutes. There was some conversation that our statute is only 10 years old when in fact, it is not. The last the last update to our statute was in 2001. So, this is long overdue, and again, we urge you to support the bill. Thank you very much for your time.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, ma'am. Floor is still open. Please state your full name for the record.

Andrew Taimanao: *Buenas Dias or Buenas Tatdes. I na'an-hu si Andrew Taimanao. Guahu mu mane' neha este i Special Victims Investigation Unit gi DPS. Hunggan, todū este ma mensiona gof magahet, manma susedi este siha pago gi presente. Esta matto i ora para ta tulaika este na lai. Gaigi yu' guini sa hu supopota este na bill. Lao, hu fafaisen hamyo na in hasuyi ya ta supotta ya ta pasa este na bill. Si Yu'us ma'ase.*

President Dennis C. Mendiola: *Si Yu'us ma'ase*, Mr. Taimanao. Floor is still open. If there is no other comment--

Liana S. Hofschneider: *Hafa adai yan* good afternoon.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Good afternoon.

Liana S. Hofschneider: Good afternoon, President and members of this honorable body. *Kulan atman ti man ali'e hit, no? Puedi maolek todú este man ma' maila siha sa hu tungo ha na man makkat ya kasi buenti in tetema pat i hafa siha na gaige yu' guini. Lao, antes di baihu hanao mona, malago yu' na baihu na'i lókkue un dánkolo na si Yu'us ma'ase i persistence, i Advocacy i Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuses para i organization yan i Attorney General ni yoniha diligence. Hu gof komprende este ya hu fafaisen hamyo para in supotta magahet ya in pasa este i House Bill 24-1, in its final form. Sa impottante este na akto para i komunidát-ta, dlkike komunidát-ta bula ma susedi lao impottante na i famagu'on yan i famalao'an espesiatmente, yan ti famalao'an ha lókkue guaha lalahi, na u guaha kampo ni siña uma angokko i lai na man gaige gi fion-niha sa bula gi taotao-ta man inafekta ni este guaha lókkue gi halom familia siha. Ya, si Yu'us ma'ase nu este sa gaige yu' lókkue para baihu supotta este tihu tungo na para hu gaige este na biahi. Lao, gaige yu' guini pot uno na áttikulu i kata ni ginen i Marianas Public Land Trust... Dispensa, finénéna, guahu si Liana Sablan Hofschneider, gaige yu' guini komu guahu yan kumu gumiluluhi i Matua Council for Native Chamorro Advancement. Kulan ha estotba yu este na kata sa man gagagao i Gobietno, Honorable Arnold Palacios, bente nuebi miyón ta'lo para hu ayao gi Marianas Public Land Trust i salape, i fenkas taotao-tano. Guini ha gi alacha man matatachong-hit pot etyu kinse miyón pues hu tungo ha na guaha i yona report i Sectary of Finance ni i update ni hafa para taimanu in 'apasi-na? I gina'ga'gao gi na akto in pasa guini gi ma'pos na sakkan, gina'ga'gao na debi kumo malom i emergency reimbursement or hafa na salape ginen i Federát debi na uma 'apase gi halom trenta dias i obligao ma apasi i Gobietno tatte ni Marianas Public Land Trust ni dibi ña. Guaha gi i yoni report guini ha gi ma'pos na 2024 Citizen Centric Report, ha sasangan na guaha uno 15 million gi 2024 ya ti ha polu halom etyu nuebu na loan, so, i 15 million guiya etyi i finénéna ilek ña na taya balansa. So, i otro na 15 million malago yu' na an in konsidedera este para in nisisita in na'i akto, in na'i aturiddát i MPLT ni para hu konsigi este mona. Gaigi yo guini sa ti-hu supopota enao. I Gobietno ti sina, maseha hayi na gobietnamento ti siña na para kada ti nahong boksa-na iyona operations, sa technically operations ya ma u'usa este para i Settle Fund. Ta tungo ha esta hafa ma susedi ni i Settle Fund para hafa para ta ripiti. Lao, etyu papa in agang etyi Best Sunshine ni ma haksa etyi gue nai na ma konsigi mona sa pot i settlement fund. Mato i salape i Gobietno ti hana empas i hafa opbligasión-na pues pago kada ratu man gagao 15 million, pago 29 million ma inclúclue talo para i settlement fund. Nisita tafan para man hanao guatu gi MPLT para i opbligasión i Gobietno, impottante i MPLT na hu ebalua hafa i akto gina'ga'gao gue anai ma pasa i Covenant gi public law, March 24th, 1976, debi di hu atan etyo na salape. Sa, 17.5 million para Tinian, dos miyón para este Tanapag papa ni gaige American Memorial Park yan i Troop store, yan benti miyón para No'os, yan tin tingo hafa No'os, guiya etyi i Farallon De Medinilla. Impottante na ta bira hit tatte gi basic ya ta tan hafa ginagao-na este na salape yan para hafa este na salape? Sa, desde pago na dia taya ni uno giya hita ni derecho na taotao tano ya enague lókkue nisisita ta pula este hayi derecho, who are the people in the covenant? Sa, an un atan i covenant, ha sasangan, the people, the people of the Northern Marianas. I Constitution which is a constitution siña ta kontra i constitution. I constitution at this point, both, constitution 1, and constitution 2, certain provision of that constitution is unconstitutional. So, the colonization and the self-determination of taotao-tano, i Chamorro, trabiha ti ma komple ya esta 50 years años desde ma pasa enao. So, gaige para baihu sangani hamyo, pot fabot, na hanao tatte gi lamasa gi 703 sa ma provides este na provision gi covenant i*

703 ya i U.S. Delegate pago si Congresswoman King-Hinds ha chochonek enao mona tafan ma' cho'cho yan si Delegate King-Hinds ya uma pasa mona hafa nisisidat-na i operations yan hafa opbligasi6n-na i Marianas, parehu ha i estpit6t, i eskuela, i polisia, tod6 i enforcement say enague ta fitma for a progressively higher standard of living. Are we? That is the last question. So, baihu na para este baihu nangga sa hu tungo ha na ma refer esta este na kata guatu gi Fiscal Affairs, ya baihu nangga esta etyo. Loa, hu fafaisen hamyo na ina klaru kuant6 ina apasi-na esta nu etyu 15 million, man malak mamano yan hafa este na debi na para i Marianas Public Land Trust para hu fan na'i ta'lo sa ti debi. I debi hafa i Marianas Public Land Trust para hu cho'gue ni para hu aligao etyu 77 million plus 5 million pago which is a total of 80 plus million ni esta ma distribute ni este na pisun Kongresu la Lehislatura ni salape taotao-tano na hafa na timan ma nana'i taotao tano ni salape-niha? Sa, bula man ch6tsaga, bula man mamatai, bula man na hanao para otro tano sa makkat. So, enao ha ti baihu na meggagai polu sa esta otro biahi. Ya d6nkolo na si Yu'us ma'ase pot i atensi6n miyu ya tana fan dispasio d6dide, tafan dispasio ni taimanu ta arekla este sa ti bula i 200 million. I Department of Public Land ta ina sa duma d6na, sa according to the Supreme Court ruling, ilek ña co-trustee, and also co-trustee hamyo co-trustee, sa hamyo fumatitinas i lai ni para in ina i distribution yan i management of the Trust Fund. An ta hasso trust nai, debi ta hasso Marianas Public Land Trust, Department of Marianas, etyi i land antes, ti Marianas Public Land etyu Chamorro Land, ya debi tana komprende ya ta bira hit tatte gi covenant ya ta fan mata'chong papa sa este for your information esta pago muyong yu', publicly muyong yo man aliligao yu' abogado ni i yona, estague fafayina ni para hu ayuda taimanu taotao-tano ni para ta fan ma decolonization, full decolonization ya huma na'na'lo tatte i salape yan i tano sa taya taotao huyong siña para hu fan na'i salape yan tano, taotao-tano.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Please wrap up, ma'am.

Liana S. Hofschneider: Si Yu'us ma'ase.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you. Public comments still open. Please state your full name for the record.

Richard Hofschneider: Hafa Adai para hamyo tod6, Senator Castro, I mean, Senate President fin6n6na. Dispensa sa' guiya i Presidente ya baihu na'i d6nkolo na onrapbli para guiya. Then Senator Castro, then Senator Hofschneider, Senator Cruz, yan Senator Manglona, yan Senator King, yan Senator Babauta, yan hayi na man 6kungok guenao huyong siha na taotao tano', hafa adai para hamyo tod6 l6kkue. I am going to speak in English. Liana Hofschneider, my wife, spoke against, we are not supporting this Senate Communication No. 24-81, referral to FA committee regarding MPLT Letter regarding loan investment \$29 million on pension obligation. Mr. President and members of this honorable body. First of all, it is nice to come back here. I really miss it. But at times, when I come over here and I speak my mind freely under the United States Constitution, under the CNMI Constitution, to free speech, a lot of times, maybe 99.9%, we were not considered, not only in this body, but in the House of Representative and the Executive Branch. And we have been doing this for many years, and it is very important that, I hope that Governor Palacios have the time to listen to this hearing, and I know my good honorable Legal Counsel there for the Executive Branch back there, he is here to listen, so that is why I speak in English so he can understand too. It is very strategically, politically, and strategically and constitutionally and to arouse our community, our islanders here and abroad to put pension obligation. Let us focus on

this pension obligation. Members of this Senate body, we have heard this, when they want to desecrate, they have desecrated our government, former Governors, former members of the Legislature and all that did not stood up to prevent that desecration of close to over a thousand *Taotao Tano*, our ancestral archeological that was found. And then the reason why I keep going back, because one of the driving forces of this casino to be built on top of that is not only to build casino, there is a motive behind for our government to desecrate our first ever in the Mariana Islands, the biggest archeological site. And you can ask, unfortunately, we have to pray for our local archeologist, Mike Flemming, because he was involved with this area. He knows this and another colleague. But we need the to pay the retirement, the pension. I truly am disturbed how we did not have a billion dollars allegedly, I read on the newspaper and I want to have financial statement for my government and hopefully the federal government. Where did we spend this half a billion or more dollars that we still have to come back with pension obligation? You know what, Mr. President, you know what the Governor is doing and if you guys, I mean, if your honorable body pass this, *un faga 'gaga' i taotao tano, Chamorro, nai*, there are only two things, *fa' taotao* or *un faga 'ga' . Basta un ma faga 'ga' .* We are tired of this. Where did this half a billion dollars went? And we are going to fight against the retirees? You are putting the Matua Council for Native Chamorro Advancements has been existence for many years, and I am one of the advisors, but I come here as a consultant. Mr. President, we have to stop this. What is that, Mr. President? Okay. Thank you, Mr. President. But I just remind myself to... a very important person in our government reminded me, "Richard, do not get mad." He is really true. I should not get mad because I am high blood pressure. I am a cancer survivor and I am still going. And Esther Muna, we should scrutinize her medical referral back there. Why are they operating this fiasco in the medical referral? And Mr. President, I want to-- you do not have to admonish me for getting off track, but she is here.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Stick to the agenda.

Richard Hofschneider: Yes, that is right, Mr. President. This is the only time the people can hear me.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: We still have to stick to the agenda, Mr. Hofschneider, please.

Richard Hofschneider: Mr. President, *munga ma pass este \$29 million na pension. Pot fabot. Sa' este na body, nai*, if the Governor *in faga 'gaga' i Chamorro nai*, then this body, if you consented, then *un faga 'gaga' ham, sa' we* are the one going to fight against the retirees.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Wrap it up.

Richard Hofschneider: Mr. President. I will wrap it up in one minute. Since 1991, there are some Chamorros back here that do not have homestead. Up to last year of October 2024, I went to DPL. One thousand four hundred some *na Chamorro* do not have land here in Saipan and you can verify that if it is going up or going down. We got to stop this land transfer and any transfer of funds because our people are dying from cancer, heart disease, they need the money to pay to go off island, and that is the one we should focus on.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Your time is up, Mr. Hofschneider.

Richard Hofschneider: Thank you, Mr. President. And lastly, start paying back the \$80 million to the beneficiaries. Thank you very much.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you. Public comments still open. Please state your full name for the record.

Joseph Mundo Castro: *Buenas taldes, Siñot Presidente yan miembron este i pisun i Guma' Kongresu san hulo', Senadot, Senadoras. Guahu si Joseph Mundo Castro. Matto yu' magi para baihu supotta este na proposito i bente kuarto trenta i ocho, A Bill for an Act, "To rename the Boating Safety Building under Jose Camacho Sablan AKA Bade." Ya-hu, I like the sign that our Honorable Mayor RB Camacho put along the road: "if you see something, say something." In 2009, I saw something and I make a recommendation to the 16th Legislature, to the former congressman, a cousin of mine, Ray Palacios, and the Honorable Congressman Sylvester Iguel from Tanapag. I was a retiree and I am still a retiree from the Department of Public Safety. I left the Department of Public Safety in 1990, and I came back to serve under the pleasure of the late Honorable Froilan C. Tenorio and Jesse Borja. When I got into Public Safety, I met with the United States Coast Guard, and they asked me why DPS did not apply the 1990 Boating Recreational Funding. I told the United States Coast Guard Representative, "Sir, I am sorry I do not look back. Whatever happened in 1990, it is gone. I am moving forward." Any federal grant that will come in to my watch, I will take and work for my people and that is exactly what I did. So, the Boating Safety facility down there, I was the one who signed the contract as a Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety. But I never tried to ask anybody to name that place for me, I do not need that. When I look back at history, Honorable Senators and *Senadoras*, and I found one person, and this is while I was in Washington State, one night, and I thought that Jose C. Sablan should be named on that building. When DPS do not have the resources, he managed to coordinate things and go out and rescue people and train DPS personnel. That thing is within my mind up to this point. This is not new. 2009 and the last previous Legislature, 21st Legislature, I brought it to the attention of Congressman Manny Castro and BJ Attao, with a joint signature, now Commissioner Anthony Macaranas, we signed the letter and I kept following this concern because it is still bothering me. I cannot sleep. I want to see this happen. The evidence, the things that are written in this proposed bill speaks to itself. I do not need to elaborate other than to ask you all *bendisi pot fabot ya ta onra i taotao ni masa'pet. Gue na tiempo*, at that time, he sacrificed his life. He goes down to the water and retrieved dead bodies. I was with him when he retrieved the dead body of the yakuza that was down in bonzai. I was on the boat. I cannot go down because definitely, I will not come back because I am not a diver.*

President Dennis C. Mendiola: One minute, Mr. Castro.

Joseph Mundo Castro: But Mr. Sablan did his best, so I only ask, *hu gagagao hamyo, ni konsiderasion miyu ya in na fan maggem hamyo ya en na'i este bendision. Hamyo gumogotte i minalagu este na proposito. Uno ha na kinimprindeku ginen uno na patgon-ña si Mr. Sablan, i Assistant Chief, ni para uma amenda ya uma na halom etyu B-A-D-E, AKA, yanggen man kontentu hamyo ta'lo, si Yu'us ma'ase, and guaha kuestlon miyu, listo yu' baihu oppe' hamyo.*

President Dennis C. Mendiola: *Si Yu'us ma'ase*, Mr. Castro. Floor is still open.

Liana S. Hofschneider: Thank you, Mr. President. *Dispensa magahet. Ta'lo, guahu si Liana Sablan Hofschneider. Gaige' yu guini para baihu--*

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Mrs. Hofschneider, if you are going to make a comment on the same--

Liana S. Hofschneider: Yes.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Same portion of the agenda or different?

Liana S. Hofschneider: No, this one.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Okay. Go ahead.

Liana S. Hofschneider: *Impottante na para baihu tohge guini sa' kumu guahu che'lun the late DPS Director, pago Commissioner ma fananan. I building gi papa Jose M. Sablan, gi polisia, hunggan magahet hu gof tungo' ya supopotta i Senate Bill 24-31 ma introdusi gi as, despensa magahet ti hu taitai lao hu angokko, gi as Senator Manny Gregory Castro. Hu supopotta este sa' hu gof tungo si Bade. Guahu i iyoña Maid of Honor anai para hu asagua yan si Lucy. Yan hu gof tungo magahet si Bade nu todun na naña-ña ya an sasangan si Uncle Joe i fina'pos ña, hunggan, magahet, sa' guaha hu hungok siha estoria ya nguentos i polisia ya impottante na ta na'i i taotao onra, ya ta na'i antes de ta sigi mo'na. Enao para baihu sangani hamyo na I am in support of Senate Bill 24-31 and I ask for your consideration. Si Yu'us ma'ase.*

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Mrs. Hofschneider. Floor is still open. Please state your full name for the record.

Anthony I. Macaranas: Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Anthony I. Macaranas.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Good afternoon.

Anthony I. Macaranas: I am the DPS Commissioner. I am here before you to ask for your support for House Communication 24-34, this is in regards to naming the Marine Patrol Building as the Jose Camacho Sablan building. Retired assistant Chief Jose Sablan is a mentor, he is a colleague, and most of all, he is a best friend of--

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Mr. Macaranas, just for correction and for record purposes, I think it is Senate Communication.

Anthony I. Macaranas: Okay. I stand to be corrected, Mr. President. Thank you.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you.

Anthony I. Macaranas: I come before you to ask for your utmost support to giving this honorable person his name to be blessed to that building. As Mr. Castro had mentioned earlier, he is the founder of the program that started the boat safety program, and I support his intent. The other

thing too is it has been an honor for Mr. Sablan to be given that opportunity to name the building that he started from the beginning. So again, I ask, before all of you and your colleagues, to please support this in naming that building and make it possible. I appreciate it. Thank you. Have a nice day.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Mr. Macaranas. Commissioner, for correction purposes, I just want to make sure that it is clear. It is Senate Bill No. 24-38, "To rename DPS Building Safety Building," correct?

Anthony I. Macaranas: Yes, sir. I stand corrected.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Okay. Just want to make sure, because communication as well on us. Okay?

Anthony I. Macaranas: Alright. Sure. I stand corrected, sir. Thank you.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you. Floor is still open. If there is no more comments, I now close the Public Comment of the agenda. Moving on, item C of the agenda, Reading and Approval of the Journal?

**READING AND APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL
NONE**

There is none. Item D, we got Messages from the Governor, Clerk?

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

CLERK: Mr. President, we have six (6) on our agenda, 24-49 to 54.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. Any messages from the members? Moving on, item E, Communications from the Judiciary?

**COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE JUDICIARY
NONE**

There is none. Item F, Communications from the Heads of Executive Department?

**COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS
NONE**

There is none. Item G, Communications from the House, Clerk?

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE HOUSE

CLERK: Mr. President, we have nine (9) on our agenda, 24-33 to 41.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. Any statements from the members? Moving on, item H of the agenda, Communication from the Senate, Clerk?

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE SENATE

CLERK: We have 24-79 to 83, Mr. President.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. Any statements from the members? Moving on, item I, Communications from the CNMI Delegate?

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE WASHINGTON DELEGATE
NONE

There is none. Unfinished Business?

UNFINISHED BUSINESS
NONE

There is none. Pre-filed Bills, Initiatives, Local Bills and Resolutions, I recognize Senator Manny Castro.

PRE-FILED BILLS, INITIATIVES, LOCAL BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro: Thank you, Mr. President. Formally introducing Senate Bill 24-38, "To rename the DPS Boating Safety Building to the 'Jose Camacho Sablan Boating Safety Station' in recognition of his contributions and dedication to ensuring the safety of the public in the surrounding waters of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands."

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Senator Castro. Moving on, I would like to formally introduce Senate Bill No. 24-39, "To amend 2 CMC §4144(e) so that it is consistent with the 150-foot limit provided under 1 CMC §2806(e)." Another bill, I am formally introducing Senate Bill No. 24-40, "To amend 9 CMC §3114 by requiring the Department of Public Safety's Rules & Regulations regarding Commercial vehicles be consistent with" that of the federal government. Just brief message on these two communications, it is really, I would just like to, Senate Bill 24-40, I just like to recognize the previous author, Representative Marissa Flores. This is pretty much a straightforward bill. It is pretty much just ensuring that regulations are consistent given that the Motor Carrier is heavily funded by the federal government. That is it. Moving on, item L, recognize Senator Donald Manglona.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS, INITIATIVES, LOCAL BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. Introducing Senate Bill 24-41, "To establish a Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands."

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. Recognize Senator Manny Castro.

Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro: Thank you, Mr. President. Formally introducing a Senate Legislative Initiative, "To amend Article II, Sections 2, 3, and 6 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to reduce the number of members in the Senate to Six and the House of Representatives to Seven, to elect the members of the House of Representatives at-large, and to authorize the members of the Legislature to enact local laws concurrently with municipal council members, and to authorize the Lieutenant Governor to vote in the Senate when there is a tie; and for other purposes."

President Dennis C. Mendiola: I recognize your bravery, Senator Castro. Moving on, recognize Floor Leader. Or, I am sorry, I take that back. Recognize Senator Magofna.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to introduce Senate Resolution No. 24-06, "To disapprove the Executive Order No. 2025-002, 'To transfer authority for the supervision of Casino Gaming from the Commonwealth Casino Commission to the Commonwealth Lottery Commission pursuant to NMI Constitution Article III, Section 15.'", and if I may, Mr. President, I would like to provide some background on this resolution.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: You sure may.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Thank you. This is the Governor's Executive Order No. 2025-002, which is offering to transfer the authority for supervision of Casino Gaming from the Commonwealth Casino Commission to the Commonwealth Lottery Commission. As stated in Section One of the Executive Order, the duties and responsibilities of the Casino Commission are transferred to the Lottery Commission. The authority to enforce the casino license agreement and the exclusive casino license are also transferred to the Lottery Commission. The Casino Commissioners are removed for cause and the Casino Commission Commissioners are replaced with the Lottery Commission Commissioners. The Senate Gaming Committee held two committee meetings to review, discuss, and receive comments from the public from the Casino Commission, the Senate Legal Counsel on the impact of the transfer of both the Casino Commission and the Lottery Commission. The Governor cites NMI Constitution Article III, Section 15, as his authority to transfer the Casino Commission to the Lottery Commission. While it is clear that the Governor does have authority to make changes in the allocation of the executive branch agencies, there are limits to that authority as established by the CNMI Supreme Court in the case *Torres v. Commonwealth*. The court essentially held that if an Executive Order significantly changes the administration of an agency, nullifies existing statutes, and/or creates a new agency, then the Executive Order may infringe on the Legislature's authority to legislate. Executive Order 2025-002 not only transfers the duties and responsibilities of the Casino Commission to the Lottery Commission, but it terminated for cause the existing Casino Commission Commissioners and replaced them with the Lottery Commission Commissioners who do not qualify as commissioners under 4 CMC § 2313. The Lottery Commission has four members with three department heads and the elected Attorney General. The fact that the Lottery Commission Commissioners will replace the Casino Commission Commissioners--

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Madam Chair, I am sorry, if I may, can you just hold off on where you left off and I am just going to have you continue when we go to the Committee Report - discussion portion of the Committee Report.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: No problem, President.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Just so that we can move to suspend the Rules.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Okay.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: So just hold off, when we get to the Committee Report and we move for the adoption of the Committee Report, I will have you finish off on the discussion portion. Recognize Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. At this time, I move to suspend Pertinent Rules to place Senate Resolution 24-06 on today's Resolution Calendar for action.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: There is a motion offered by the Floor Leader to place Senate Resolution No. 24-02 on today's Resolution Calendar, and it has been seconded. Any discussions by the members? All in favor of that motion, say aye.

Members voiced, "aye."

Those opposed say, nay. Motion carries. Okay, I am going to go back and we are going to roll call that. Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta

-

Senator Celina R. Babauta: Excuse me, Mr. President, what are we voting on? Clarification, please?

President Dennis C. Mendiola: The resolution, to move it to Calendar for action.

Senator Celina R. Babauta: The resolution to move it to Resolution Calendar for action today?

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Yes.

Senator Celina R. Babauta: My vote will be no.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	No
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, seven (7) members voting yes; one (1) member, no; one (1) absent.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With seven members voting yes, Senate Resolution 24-02 is hereby moved to Resolution Calendar for action. Moving on.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Sorry, Mr. President. Correction, it is Senate Resolution 24-6. I think you stated 2, 24-2.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Okay. Thank you. So, we are going to go back and restart that motion because the number that we voted on was incorrect, so we are going to make sure that it is correct. Recognize the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Once again, Mr. President, I move to suspend Pertinent Rules to place Senate Resolution 24-06 on today's Resolution Calendar for action.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. There is a motion offered by the Floor Leader to place Senate Resolution No. 24-06 in today's Resolution Calendar and it was seconded. Discussion?

Members voiced, "ready."

Recognize Senator Babauta.

Senator Celina R. Babauta: *Si Yu'us ma'ase*, Mr. President. If I heard correctly from the Floor Leader, the motion is to suspend Pertinent Rules?

President Dennis C. Mendiola: And to place on--

Senator Celina R. Babauta: Are those two separate motions or?

President Dennis C. Mendiola: It is the same because I am going to have to call for adoption after--

Senator Celina R. Babauta: Yes. I understand that.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: So, it is one motion to place and to suspend and place--

Senator Celina R. Babauta: So, we are compiling it into one motion?

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Correct.

Senator Celina R. Babauta: Okay. I am ready to vote.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	No
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, seven (7) members voting yes, one (1) no, one (1) absent.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With seven members voting yes to place Senate Resolution No. 24-06 on today's Calendar for action and to suspend the Rule, Senate Resolution No. 24-06 is hereby placed on today's Calendar. Moving on, item M, Reports of Standing Committees. Recognize Floor Leader.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. We have Standing Committee Report No. 24-16 from the Committee on Judiciary, Government and Law reporting on Senate Bill No. 24-19 - To amend 9 CMC §2208(d) to authorize motor vehicle licensure to all residents of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The Committee recommends passage in its current form and I move for its adoption.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

The motion has been seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor leader. There is a motion offered to adopt Standing Committee Report No. 24-16 and it was seconded. Any discussions by the members? Recognize Senator Cruz. I am on discussion. Any discussion by the members?

Members voiced, "ready."

Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, all eight (8) members voting yes.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With eight members voting yes, Standing Committee Report No. 24-16 is hereby adopted. Moving on. Floor Leader?

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Mr. President, we have Standing Committee Report No. 24-17 from the Committee on Judiciary, Government and Law reporting on Senate Bill No. 24-21 - To amend 9 CMC § 2103 to require execution of a Notice of Transfer and Release of Liability by the appropriate parties upon the ownership transfer of a vehicle. The Committee recommends passage in its current form and I move for its adoption.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

The motion has been seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. There is a motion offered to adopt Standing Committee Report No. 24-17 and it was seconded. Any discussions from the members?

Members voiced, "ready."

Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent

Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, all eight (8) members voting yes.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With eight members voting yes, Standing Committee Report No. 24-17 is hereby adopted. Floor Leader?

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Mr. President, we have Standing Committee Report No. 24-18 from the Committee on Judiciary, Government and Law reporting on House Bill No. 24-1, HS1 - To amend provisions in Title 6, Chapter 3, Sexual Offenses, Article 1, General Provisions, relating to sexual abuse/assault of minors. The Committee recommends passage in its current form and I move for its adoption.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. There is a motion offered to adopt Standing Committee Report No. 24-18 and it was seconded. Any discussions from the members?

Members voiced, "ready."

Recognize Senator Nabors.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senate President. I did want to say that I will be making a technical Floor Amendment when we get to the bill to just add Title 6, Chapter 1. No, Title 6, Part 1 of Chapter 3. I just wanted to make that clear for the members.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you. Any other discussion?

Members voiced, "ready."

Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, all eight (8) members voting yes.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With eight members voting yes, Standing Committee Report No. 24-18 is hereby adopted. Moving on. Floor Leader?

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Mr. President, we have Standing Committee Report No. 24-19 from the Committee on Judiciary, Government and Law reporting on House Bill No. 24-2 – To establish a process for the delivery of a State of the Commonwealth Address to the Legislature by the Governor. The Committee recommends passage in its current form and I move for its adoption.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. There is a motion offered to adopt Standing Committee Report No. 24-19 and was seconded. Any discussions from the members?

Members voiced, "ready."

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, all eight (8) members voting yes.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With eight members voting yes, Standing Committee Report No. 24-19 is hereby adopted. Floor Leader?

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Mr. President, we have Standing Committee Report No. 24-20 from the Committee on Fiscal Affairs reporting on House Bill No. 24-19 - To rename the "CNMI Scholarship Office" to the "CNMI Scholarship and Financial Assistance Office." The Committee recommends passage in its current form and I move for its adoption.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. A motion was offered to adopt Standing Committee Report No. 24-20 and it was seconded. Any discussions by the members?

Members voiced, "ready."

Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, all eight (8) members voting yes.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With eight members voting yes, Standing Committee Report No. 24-20 is hereby adopted. Floor Leader?

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Mr. President, we have Standing Committee Report No. 24-21 from the Committee on Public Utilities, Transportation and Communications reporting on House Bill No. 24-29 - To reconcile public utility accounts between CHCC and CUC by waiving intra-governmental penalties and preserving enforceable debt obligations; and for other purposes. The Committee recommends passage in the form of SD1 and I move for its adoption.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. A motion was made to adopt Standing Committee Report No. 24-21 and it was seconded. Any discussions by the members? Recognize Senator Babauta.

Senator Celina R. Babauta: *Si Yu'us ma'ase*, Mr. President. I would like to make a comment on this Senate Standing Committee Report, if I may. I rise today to express my deep concern regarding the Committee's recommendation to pass House Bill 24-29, Senate Draft 1, "To reconcile public utility accounts between CHCC and CUC by waiving intra-governmental penalties and preserving enforceable debt obligations." While I understand the intent of this bill, it is to clean up the books among two government agencies, I cannot, in good conscience, ignore the broader implications of such a bill. The permanent exclusion of penalties related to CHCC's nonpayment sends the wrong message, in my opinion, especially when thousands of hardworking families in our islands are being hit by skyrocketing utility costs and arbitrary fees. Let us be clear, if this bill becomes law, the effects are permanent. We are codifying special treatment for one government agency while ignoring the struggles of families who face disconnections and late fees to fend for themselves. *Kada guma guini gi Commonwealth, parehu-ha Saipan, Tinian, yan Luta, hagas-ha' na man gagagao asi'i yan konsiderasion ginen este na body.* This is not fairness. In my opinion, it is not equity. Today, it is CHCC, tomorrow, it is going to be another government agency seeking relief without public accountability. Where do we draw the line? I also want to remind this body that on February 6th of this year, I introduced Senate Bill 24-14, a measure that would have temporarily suspended certain fees within the Fuel Adjustment Charge. This proposal was designed to provide immediate and across the board relief to all rate payers in mind, including CHCC, but with a greater emphasis on relief for our families *yan i manamko' siha* and our small businesses, who are bearing the weight of every delinquent government agency and trying to weather this economic crisis not of their own doing. Families who face power disconnections for as little as \$50 in arrears are expected to keep paying more for less. They are asking, no pleading, for us to prioritize their needs. So, I urge my colleagues to consider the fact that this legislation effectively writes off millions of dollars in penalties owed by CHCC. And I did not find in the report anywhere that CUC will absorb this cost. Will CUC be forced to spread this financial burden across all rate payers, again? Will the general fund be tapped to backfill this shortfall, or will this body simply ignore the deficit and hope it disappears? These are hard questions that I think as a legislator, I feel must be answered before I can support such a bill. While I would really like to support the goal of reconciling inter-agency obligations, I find it highly problematic that no official comments from CUC were presented to this body. So, I urge my colleague, the good Chairman of PUTC, Senator Jude Hofschneider, to bring my bill forward for markup and debate. The people have spoken, they have taken it to social media, written letters, spoken out publicly, begging for leadership that responds to their pain. Instead, we are choosing to act only on behalf of one government agency while those we serve, those who elected us to this office are left in the dark, literally and figuratively. If the goal was to address systemic issues between CHCC and CUC, then let us do it holistically, is what I am asking, and equitably. That said, I would also want to be fair to CHCC. I support their leadership in finding creative ways to increase their revenue. But again, I would like to see this addressed in a holistic manner, not in a piecemeal legislation like this, and definitely not on the backs of struggling families out there *yan etyu siha ma mopble na taotao-ta. Si Yu'us ma'ase, Siñot Presidente, hu na'na'lo tatte i tiempo-ku.*

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Senator Babauta. Any other member? Senator Castro. Recognize Senator Castro.

Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro: Chair, I will go after - I will yield to Senator Nabors.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Senator Castro. Senator Nabors?

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Mr. President. And I just want say for the record, I understand where our good Senator from the Third Senatorial District is coming from as it relates to the plight and the suffering of all of those people, all of us users, consumers of CUC providers. The hospital is in a very unique position that it cannot turn away any patient, anybody that goes to the ER, anybody that comes in with or without any kind of insurance. There was an article in the paper that they are absorbing several costs under the health program which deals with medical referral. And it is very difficult for me, and I understand the intention of this bill, I understand where Senator Babauta is coming from. I think we can walk and chew gum. I think both things can be accomplished at the same time, but I think this is an important piece of legislation to directly assist the main medical provider in the Commonwealth with the kind of relief that they need. Obviously, because of the some of the protocols that they have in place, the air conditioning and the temperature has to stay at a certain temperature for disease control and all these other things. They run equipment there that pull a lot more power than other entities are doing, a regular office would. So, there are so many things in consideration that makes the Commonwealth Health Center a very unique entity and I do not think that they should be lumped in, per se, with every other line item agency under our purview. So, with that, I just yield.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Senator Nabors. I now recognize Senator Castro.

Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro: Thank you, Senate President. In looking at this bill--

President Dennis C. Mendiola: You have minutes since you yielded your time.

Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro: Okay. I will make it fast.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: I am just kidding.

Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro: First of all, a lot of these charges should have been waived a long time ago. These are charges that is already like beyond uncollectible and that is like basic accounting. So, the issue at a lot of these agencies is not an alignment issue, it is not a machinist issue, it is not the people, it is not an operations issue, it is a management issue. So, we have issues in the leadership, and in fact, but I am not saying... we have good leaders, but some of the decisions need to be strategic. We cannot just keep pumping money into something. I would rather pump money into the people and give them control over their utilities and just go solar. Because even in today's article, more money does not mean better results. It is what you do with that money that really makes a difference. And yes, our people are suffering. I am suffering, too. I know CUC knows that, because I always get the gray bills. But we really and I just wanted to thank our Chairman of the PUTC for really taking the initiative to meet with the movers and shakers in the

energy realm. We have people that have been coming to Saipan that know how to fix this problem. I also wanted to thank our Senator, Senator Magofna, for introducing some legislation that is going to help decentralize some of these agencies because we cannot just keep pumping money and expecting different results. It is already; it is not going to solve the problem. But I think I ran out of that one minute. But at the end of the day, I am in support of this legislation because if you are following the generally accepted accounting principles, this should have been internally done a long time ago. Thank you.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Senator Castro. Recognize Senator Magofna.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Thank you, President. Just for clarification, this legislation is proposing to waive penalties and fees and not the principal balance of what CHCC truly owes CUC. So, we just need to clarify that. And second of all, I just want the public to hear that by waiving these penalties and fees, I do not believe that there will be additional financial burden on the rate payers because this is not affecting the operations in any way. This is just additional fees and penalties on top of the principal balance. So, I just wanted to clarify that, and not to cause any unnecessary alarm in the community that if this bill should pass, that CUC will impose these additional penalties and fees onto the residential rate payers. I think it is important that we clarify that. Thank you, President.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Senator Magofna. Any other members? Senator Babauta, one more time.

Senator Celina R. Babauta: *Si Yu'us ma'ase*, Mr. President. I appreciate Senator Magofna's comments of her belief that this will not be absorbed by rate payers, all rate payers, but absent any comment from CUC in that committee meeting that was held, I do not believe we should vote on someone's belief or opinion. Secondly, Senator Castro alluded to the GAAP, Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. However, it is GASB that the government practices. And I do not believe that any government has the ability or the authority to waive, or what do you call it in accounting, write off any, and certainly none in the seat of my government, I know that we cannot write off debt. It remains in our books unless there is legislation to do so, so I just wanted to make those comments and clarify some of the statements made by other members. And again, I stand by my principles that absent any comment from CUC, the affected government entity, as to what they will do with the approximately 30, maybe \$40 million in arrears and penalties imposed on CHCC, I cannot in good conscience support this bill and will reserve my support for such. Thank you. *Si Yu'us ma'ase*.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Senator Babauta. Senator Hofschneider?

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Thank you, Pres. I move to end discussion and we will talk more on Bill Calendar. Just call the roll.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you. Do I hear a second? If none, I am going to recognize Senator Karl really quick.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senator President. And this is just to wrap it all into a neat bow. If this piece of legislation was so detrimental to the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation, I believe in all honesty, that they would have come forward and provided comments when solicited regarding this piece of legislation. So, if they had an issue or if there was a standing problem with it, I believe that they would have come forward and offered amendments or participated in the comment section. So, I yield.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Senator Nabors. And let me just wrap this up with my statement. The problem is, it does not matter where you stand in the spectrum of this issue. If you stand in on CUC's side, there is funding to be lost. If you stand on CHCC, there is a probable risk that CHCC might increase its rate in, increase any kind of charges. And again, if we talk about some of the charges, right, not every charge is paid for. Some of these patients that come in are struggling and cannot pay for their bills. So again, CHCC have to shoulder this cost. And, that is where the challenge lies with CHCC. I just got a communication that the Health Network Program that was shifted to CHCC became problematic for them because then the Legislature is not giving them funding. So, it is a multi-layer of issues that we need to address. And I thank the Chairman for his bravery on taking the lead and trying to resolve this problem. But again, it does not matter where we stand on the spectrum, somebody stands to lose something. But I think when it comes down to our health, I think that is most paramount to anybody. God forbid it is one of our parents, family members, that cannot be taken care of in our only hospital. It is going to be problematic. I am sure that we are going to have more people marching up here to the Legislature protesting on those issues. I am going to wrap this up. Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	No
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Mr. President, clarification, this is only the committee report, no?

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Yes, sir.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	Yes
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, seven (7) members voting yes, one (1) member no.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With seven members voting yes, *esta* I lost what Standing Committee Report we are at just with the long debate, but with seven members voting yes, Standing Committee Report No. 24-21 is hereby adopted. Moving on.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Mr. President, brief recess, please?

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Short recess.

The Senate recessed at 3:05 p.m.

RECESS

The Senate reconvened at 3:06 p.m.

We now rise back to session. Members, if it is okay with you guys, if we can just jump to entertain the Bill Calendar for this specific Standing Committee Report. So, we got the staff back there waiting for this and I am sure it is going to be a longer debate. So, if we can just jump to entertain that and go back, if that is okay with the members?

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: No objection.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: No objection, Mr. President. Proceed.

Senator Celina R. Babauta: Entertain to vote?

President Dennis C. Mendiola: To vote on the bill. We are moving to the Bill Calendar to vote on it.

Senator Celina R. Babauta: Only on that particular--

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Only on that. No other one. I am just trying to get the CHCC staff out of here. I can see their frustration back there and so, if there is no objection, we are going to move into that.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Mr. President, may I offer a clarification on another bill?

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Go ahead.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: I see also the coalition and all of these supporters of 24-1. If we can entertain that, as well?

President Dennis C. Mendiola: If there is no objection with the members?

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: No objection. Thank you.

Senator Celina R. Babauta: Are we still on recess?

President Dennis C. Mendiola: No, we rise back already.

Senator Celina R. Babauta: Okay. I do have a pressing meeting that I am late for, so if we could possibly just entertain the last committee report and then move to--

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Senator Babauta, nobody is holding you from staying in the session. You can go to your meeting.

Senator Celina R. Babauta: Yes, but I would need to make comments on the last Standing Committee Report.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: I am going to ask, if there is no objection from the members, majority rules, if you guys do not mind if we may proceed--

Senator Celina R. Babauta: There is only one other committee report.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Mr. President?

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Go ahead, Senator Hofschneider.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: It is understood that we are going to convene into Committee of the Whole for further clarification?

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Absolutely.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: So, that is the reason why the member is asking if we can entertain House Bill 24-1 and another house bill that we already adopted the committee report. So, we can then go back to the committee report so potentially we can have the Floor Leader commission the Committee of the Whole so that we can request the Counsel to further elaborate.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Any other members objecting to this proposal besides Senator Babauta? Short recess.

The Senate recessed at 3:08 p.m.

RECESS

The Senate reconvened at 3:09 p.m.

We now rise back into session. The majority agreed to move into Bill Calendar so we can dispose of House Bill 24-1 and House Bill 24-29, SD1.

Members voiced, "ready."

BILL CALENDAR

Ready? Floor Leader?

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. At this time, I move for the passage of House Bill No. 24-1, HS1, "To amend provisions in Title 6, Chapter 3, Sexual Offenses, Article 1, General Provisions, relating to sexual abuse/assault of minors."

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. There is a motion offered to pass House Bill 24-1, HS1, and it has been seconded. Discussion? Recognize Senator Nabors.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senate President. I wanted to just offer a technical Floor Amendment, again, to reference "Title 6, Division1, Chapter 3", that is just a technical Amendment for the title.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you. We will just go ahead and make the Amendment. It is just a technical Amendment. Any other discussion? Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	Yes
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, all eight (8) members voting yes.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With eight members voting yes, House Bill No. 24-1, HS1, with the technical Amendment hereby passes the Senate. Thank you. Moving on, recognize Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. At this time, I move for the passage of House Bill No. 24-29, SD1, "To reconcile public utility accounts between CHCC and CUC by waiving intra-governmental penalties and preserving enforceable debt obligations; and for other purposes."

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. There is a motion offered to pass House Bill No. 24-29, SD1, and it was seconded. Any discussions from the members?

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Just a quick recap, Mr. President.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Recognize Senator Hofschneider.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Just referencing some of the concerns based earlier, just a couple things. This is basically an accompanying legislation to which this very body supported to categorically transfer CHCC's utility rates from government to commercial rate, and I want to thank the members of this body and the House for supporting that. But there is also a provision in that very legislation that actually addresses this particular proposal that we have before us. But at the time, the House preferred elected to remove that, therefore producing this piece of legislation before us today, and *si* Dr. Muna is here and Ms. Cabrera had been advocating for the Legislature to assist our only hospital that provides for every walking resident that walk in there, whether they are a holder of an insurance, indigent, or somebody that does not have any insurance whatsoever, they absorb that. So, all the more reason that the Legislature and every other member of this government should assist with their requests to ride their ship by cleaning some of their long overdue past due obligations that everybody knows in here that there is never a way, there is no way that you are going to be able to pay \$70 million and they are always going to be non-marketable. They cannot even market their corporation to improve services for our people, from infrastructure to services. So, this is one way, a step in the right direction to assist our CHCC. And I think I appreciate the passion of helping the general being of our people to lower the rates, but I am working with some members of this body to come up with a legislation to allow for that, which I will not disclose right now. And number two is we need to have a better economy, ladies and gentlemen. We need to work on improving the revenue in the government so that the public programs that we can provide our people can come before us, and then we can assist the indigents with their utilities, if that is what our primary goal is. But until such time that we figure that out, this bill is one way to help those very people that we say that we are trying to help by way of their utilities. I respectfully ask that just vote on this and move forward and we look forward to another legislation that can continue to assist the general public. *Si Yu'us ma'ase*, I now yield back.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Senator Hofschneider. Any other members? Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	No
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	Yes
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, seven (7) members voting yes, one (1) member no, one (1) absent.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With seven members voting yes, House Bill No. 24-29, SD1, hereby passes the Senate. Now, we are going to go back to the Standing Committee Report. Thank you, CHCC, for your patience.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

So, members, this is the part where we will resolve into Committee of the Whole so bear with me. Floor Leader?

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. We have Standing Committee Report No. 24-22 from the Committee on Gaming reporting on the Executive Order No. 2025-002 - To transfer the authority for supervision of casino gaming from the Commonwealth Casino Commission (CCC) to the Commonwealth Lottery Commission (CLC). I move for its adoption.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. There is a motion to adopt Standing Committee Report No. 24-22 and it was seconded. Any discussions from the members? Recognize Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: At this time, Mr. President, I move to resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. There is a motion to resolve into Committee of the Whole, and it was seconded. Any discussion? Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	Yes
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	Yes
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes

Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, all eight (8) members voting yes.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With eight (8) members voting yes to resolve into Committee of the Whole, we now resolve into Committee of the Whole. Short recess.

The Senate recessed at 3:17 p.m.

RECESS

The Senate reconvened and resolved into Committee of the Whole at 3:27 p.m.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: We now rise into Committee of the Whole and up for discussion, we have Standing Committee Report No. 24-22 on the Executive Order No. 2025-002, "To transfer the authority for supervision of casino gaming from the Commonwealth Casino Commission (CCC) to the Commonwealth Lottery Commission (CLC).", and I believe Senator Magofna wanted to continue her discussion on this Executive Order. And so, at this time, I recognize Senator Magofna.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Thank you, Senator Donald. So, resuming back into the background of the resolution, the Governor's Executive Order not only transfers the duties and responsibilities of the Casino Commission to the Lottery Commission, but it terminated for cause the existing casino commissioners and replaced them with the Lottery Commission Commissioners who do not qualify as commissioners under 4 CMC, Section 2313. The Lottery Commission has four members with three department heads and the elected Attorney General. The fact that the Lottery Commission Commissioners will replace the Casino Commission Commissioners and are not qualified as Casino Commission Commissioners significantly changes the administration of the Casino Commission and alters or nullifies sections of 4 CMC, sections 2313. The Executive Order also contradicts with 4 CMC, sections 2313, which states that the CCC commissioners cannot be government employees or officials. All the Lottery Commission Commissioners are government officials. Section 2313 also provides that the Casino Commissioners can only be removed for cause. The Executive Order states that by transferring their duties to the Lottery Commission, the Casino Commissioners will no longer have duties and therefore are removed for cause. There is no stated evidence that the Casino Commissioners neglected their duties or committed any bad acts. In addition to the legal issues, there are many policy concerns and issues raised by the Executive Order, including whether the Lottery Commission members who are heads of their respective line executive departments with full-time jobs would have sufficient time to supervise the Casino Commission. Whether the Lottery Commission can efficiently and effectively supervise the Casino Commission with the Lottery Commission members who are cabinet members that are often replaced for one reason or another or if the Lottery Commission members are not timely appointed or confirmed. It appears that the Casino Commission has not been

contacted by the Lottery Commission to facilitate any smooth transition or to inquire as to any standard of care that is necessary to regulate the casino industry. The Executive Order raises other issues including concerns that the EO lacks provisions governing the transfer of requisite information from the Casino Commission, including confidential documents to the Lottery Commission. The EO lacks provision transferring Casino Commission personnel and financial information statements and bank accounts, if any, to the Lottery Commission. Additionally, the EO will remove the Rota and Tinian membership in the Casino Commission, which is inconsistent with the legislative intent of Public Law of 1856. The committee members were also concerned that the Executive Order creates conflict of interest for the Attorney General because the Office of the Attorney General represents the Casino Commission in all legal matters including the IPI litigation, but is also listed as a Lottery Commission Commissioner under 1 CMC, section 9302. Whether or not the Attorney General is an active member of the Lottery Commission, it is clear that the Lottery Commission statute must be amended to clearly remove the Attorney General as a commissioner of the Lottery Commission in order to remove any perceived or actual conflict of interest. Based on the foregoing reasons, it appears that the EO creates more obstacles for the casino industry and so many unknowns and ambiguities regarding the transfer of the Casino Commission to the Lottery Commission. A better course of action would have been for all the stakeholders to come together and discuss and address amendments to the current casino law. The Legislature has the constitutional authority to make substantial changes or repeal the Casino and Lottery Commission statutes as necessary in order to facilitate progress as it relates to casino gaming moving forward and to avoid any of the legal and policy concerns raised by the Executive Order. Thank you. I yield my time.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Senator Magofna. Floor is open. Recognize Senate President.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. On top of everything that Senator or the Chair of Gaming has just stated, one of the biggest things that caught my attention and is really alarming is when 1856 was created, one of the discussions was how do we protect the retirees throughout the CNMI, and this is the intent of that the gaming industry, right, when that \$15 million was negotiated, part of that was to secure our retirees. One of the concerns that I have, transferring it to the Lottery Commission is really just the protection of our retirees in the First and Second Senatorial District. That is the biggest concern for me because, again, elected out of the First Senatorial District and to not ensure that Rota and Tinian have a voice in the gaming industry, which, if you think about it, 1856 was created by the three Senatorial Districts, not just First or Second or Third. It was a one Marianas movement and it actually benefit the CNMI as a whole, especially the retirees during the heydays of the gaming industry to just push off an Executive Order and just push it over to the Lottery Commission. And, if we talk about the Lottery Commission, you are looking at the Secretary of Finance, you are looking at the Secretary of Commerce, you are looking at the Commissioner of DPS and then the Attorney General. The problem I have with that is that now the Legislature has no say in this or the Senatorial Districts have no say in this, and that is my concern. How do we protect Rota and Tinian? And now, being that the administration is elected out of the Third Senatorial District, it is easy to just say any funding that comes in as a result of this litigation of IPI, we can just use that for operational purposes for the Third Senatorial District. Again, it is not necessarily that we do not want it for Senatorial Districts, but it is because we have that provision to protect the Senatorial District, and

that is my concern. And that is why I ask the members to stand with us First and Second Senatorial District and make sure that we are protected; our people, our retirees are protected. Again, if we push it to the Lottery Commission, there is really no say in how these fundings are going to come in and it is going to be spread out throughout the CNMI, so that is my biggest concern. Thank you, Floor Leader. I yield.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Senate President. Any other members? Recognize Senator Babauta.

Senator Celina R. Babauta: *Si Yu'us ma'ase*, Floor Leader Manglona. I rise in opposition of adopting this committee report to reject the Governor's Executive Order 2025-002, "To transfer the authority for supervision of casino gaming from the Commonwealth Casino Commission (CCC) to the Commonwealth Lottery Commission (CLC)." Let me be clear, this Executive Order is not a power grab, it is a strategic correction and realignment of a regulatory authority that reflects the current fiscal realities of our government and the lack of active casino operations in Saipan or the Commonwealth. We must not forget that CCC was established to regulate a single exclusive casino licensee, IPI - we all know that - which has failed in every and almost every measure of its obligations, financial, legal, moral obligations. IPI has brought shame to our Commonwealth, exploited our people, racked up massive unpaid debts, and sparked multiple federal and international investigations. And yet we continue to fund a regulatory agency that has no casino to regulate and no clear path to self-sustainability. And I would like to allude to a comment made by Senator Magofna in her remarks that there is no clear evidence of wrongdoing by the current commissioners, casino commissioners. However, the most glaring violation in my eyes is that they did not fulfill their fiduciary duty to collect on past debt, yet they continued to allow IPI to balloon their debt to the CNMI government, and that is why we were in a position where we could not collect it anymore because they were not able to pay. They allowed the IPI, the lone Casino, to continue operations and continue to balloon their debt to the CNMI government. I think that EO 2025-002 rightfully acknowledges this reality. The Executive Order proposes consolidating CCC score functions such as ensuring compliance, preserving investigative records, as Senator Magofna alluded to, the investigative records and maintaining institutional knowledge. It was after all the Lottery Commission who has repeatedly amended the casino license for IPI. So, they have institutional knowledge. Until such time at least the casino industry revives, if ever, this is not a dissolution, it is sound fiscal prudence and accountability, in my opinion, and opposing this Executive Order amounts to defending bureaucratic inertia. Are we really saying we would rather preserve a powerless commission with no revenue stream at this point and no viable mandate rather than let the administration manage what is left of the casino industry wreckage imposed upon the entire Commonwealth? We need to stop pretending that the current structure works. It does not, it has not, and rejecting this Executive Order sends the wrong message to our people that we would rather cling to a broken system, an institution, rather than take bold action to correct the inefficiencies of the CCC. So, I am asking my colleagues to join me in not rejecting the EO because it is a necessary step to clean up the regulatory mess they created and pave the way for a new, responsible, and effective governance of the casino industry here in the Commonwealth. Thank you, Mr. Floor Leader, and I yield.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Senator Babauta. Recognize Vice President.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Floor Leader. I just want to put things in perspective from what was just said by our good Senator from the Third Senatorial District. If this were so pressing and the Commonwealth Casino Commission was a scourge and they had not done their fiduciary duty, why is this Executive Order coming out now? How long has the Governor been the governor? If these issues were so eminent of a danger to the Commonwealth, why was there no letter or suggestion to the Legislature to remedy these issues that are so detrimental that we are going to use our powers of Executive Order to move the wheels as we so want them? Those two arguments fight against each other. If so, I would think that the Chief Executive of our government, the Governor, first item of duty upon getting into office would be to speak to the Legislature to remedy the situation that was in dire need of correction. But yet, here we are in July of 2025 talking about this. There is no mechanism in place for the Lottery Commission to gain the... Institutional knowledge, what do we mean by that when we say that? How much of the day-to-day operations are the Lottery Commission aware of? As the Chairwoman of the Gaming Committee said, no documentation has been given. The Lottery Commission themselves were offered an opportunity to come to this chamber to testify about their ability to do the job that this Executive Order is asking them to do. They did not have the time to come to the Senate and explain to us anything. Yet, now, I am to believe that you have the time to do all of the things that the Commonwealth Casino Commission does while maintaining your daily job as a cabinet member of our government? I do not see the nexus. I do not see how there is a thorough line between those two things. As a matter of fact, I see that as an example - evidence of their inability to do both things at once and for us to believe that they do have the time, they do have the knowledge, without even consulting them is a very dangerous precedent for the Legislative body to undertake. And with that, I yield, Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Any other members for the first round? I recognize Senator Castro.

Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro: There is going to be a second round? Because I can save it for the second round. Colleagues, I have been with you on a lot of the things, but for this vote, I actually believe the Governor should do more Executive Orders and clean up the bloated government that we have, and that is also why I introduced the legislative initiative today, because if we are going to do what Senate President, and I agree with him, we need to decentralize a lot of these processes and give more autonomy to our different municipalities. Again, there is no reason why we need seven signatures to get a simple NOPA or PO. Those kinds of things should not even, the RD can handle that. So, if I am going to practice the same, I do not necessarily agree, I do not know if it should go to the Lottery Commission, I think there are other places that we can put this in, but I do believe in synergizing resources and also, I think most of our constituents that, in the very beginning, were against this casino. But I understand the dire situation that we were in at that time and given the public comment made earlier, I do not agree with everything, but I agreed with some of that public comment and the fact that we desecrated the ancient remains of our people. We were in a dire situation and had the Casino Commission did its due diligence to prevent this collapse, the CNMI government would have gotten more funds rather than the federal government taking control, and we might even get less. I am not entirely against it, but I feel like we really need to, given our current economic situation, we need to reduce the amount of red tape in our government. And also, at the same time, if there is anywhere to cut, I would rather cut board members and commissions rather than our managers and frontline people. Thank you.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Senator Castro. Recognize Senator Hofschneider.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Thank you. And I think the reason why that we ask for Committee of the Whole, Mr. President, Floor Leader, is for us to further understand what we are considering before us, and I think it is understood already that most of us signed off on it and we are ready to support it, but just to articulate more to the general public as to why are we doing this exercise, I appreciate the Chair for the extensive meetings that you have conducted, and all the comments were valid, but I think it all boils back again to us, the government as a whole, our inability to actually find a niche economy. We cannot even find ourselves to support a tourism economy that is much needed right now to this day. And we always resort to addressing almost near crisis situation because there is no plan for economic recovery post COVID. It is all blame games and what should have been, could have been but let me tell you this, if you are a member of the retirement fund and you are in the situation where they are telling you that you are not going to have your pension in 15 days, I think I want to remind everybody that because of that \$30 million, we will be singing a different tune today because there is absolutely nowhere there, and Mr. Castro, I am glad you are here because you are a retiree, there is no solution at the time to rescue you guys. Not one, no other, not anybody that has that opportunity to come out with the financial infusion. Whatever happened, happened, with the non-compliance and all that, and that is obviously it is where it is at today. But I always want to remind everybody that when the money was flowing in, we have CUC assistance for everybody, we had stimulus, we had land compensation being paid off, we had supplemental for PSS, we paid off substantial amount CUC from CHCC at a tune of \$8 million, a hundred percent retirees, and then some. There is other elements that we... yet, we continued to look the other way saying that this industry was bad since the beginning. It is bad now because they are closed. I think we should be helping them try to open up, whether it is online, internet or it is evident that brick and mortar is probably past that already because of food traffic that we need. But by golly, let us not forget what this industry did for the CNMI, for the retirees, for the people. *Munga man maleffa. Maila' ya ta sigi mona ya ta arekla este, supotta este, hafa finaisen-ña si Chairwoman Corina Magofna ni pat ta reject este na EO.* Then we will do it the right way, as what was mentioned earlier, the legislation needs to come down the pipeline, then we will make sure that we do our due diligence and make sure that, as President said, Rota and Tinian is not left out again to that. And I want to go on record to say *nai*, if there is such payouts, I think of \$12 million and some, I ask that the administration reports that, so it comes to Legislature so that we can appropriate it. Let us not pretend that it is not going to happen. It is because it will. It is already publicly known. So, Mr. Floor Leader, I do not know if I am appropriate to say this, but I think we are ready to roll. Oh, sorry, and I yield back.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: For the first round, any other members? First round? If none, for the second round, I would like to recognize Senate President.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you. And just to Senator Babauta's statement, and again, sitting down here, I do not get to participate, I have to make sure that the quorum is held. But I just wanted to participate in seeing that we have this habit of going back and forth and blaming. For example, we talk about CCC, I do not think CCC is the problem. During the time of IPI's reign here in the CNMI, I think IPI is the problem, hence the reason why they are going through

litigation. It is not fair that we are going to pass the buck and blame it on CCC, and we do not even understand fully *iyoña* responsibility. Nobody here can really say that they are experts when it comes to their responsibility. And those guys, again, depends on where you stand, right? The argument can be on one side, let us get rid of CCC, they are not doing what they are supposed to do. CCC is working, been working, for the past couple years without payment. And then there is a comment that was made that, oh, we are not going to pay them because they are not a part of the government. Yet, we are going to Executive Order them and remove them from the government and give it back to... It seems like we are just going in circles in this, instead of addressing the actual problem, and I think it is correct, we need to go through the legislation and maybe repeal that exclusive casino, maybe that could be the solution and open it up to more casinos. Again, there are some people that are anti-casino. Sure, that is fine. But when it comes down to revenue for the CNMI, what other source of revenue can we bring in? That is the challenge that we are presented here, is that we need revenue, but this is going on, what, the 24th Legislature since the new Administration has taken over. So, my question is, what new revenue has been pushed out? Because here is the problem, we are looking at the new budget fiscal year again, and we are talking about borrowing money. The economy is getting better or it could be better, but yet we are borrowing money and we are increasing the cap on the Executive Branch's operational budget. So, it does not make sense. A lot of this stuff is, every time the administration changes, we are blaming it on previous, we are blaming it on our previous governor. The problem is really we need to sit down and actually fix the problem versus actually pointing it at CCC. I can tell you that those guys, they work tirelessly trying to fix this problem. I heard a lot of the ridicules that, "oh, they are not doing what they are supposed to be doing." "The crane is dangerous." That is not CCC's role. Their job is really to just regulate the casino industry. But yet they carried that burden. "They were not doing their job; they were not doing their role." As soon as IPI went in litigation, CCC could not revoke the license or could not make any action because why? It is with judicial. So, they have to wait for that process to take its course. So again, the problem is and I get it, that there is a lot of dismay out there in terms of what transpired during IPI, but the problem is we need to come together and actually fix this problem. Maybe offer a legislation that will open from one casino to multiple casinos or maybe just repeal the whole 1856 and there is no casino. But again, I am going to ask the question: so, what other source of revenue can we bring in that is going to bring us back to where we can actually sustain our operational expenditure in the Executive Branch? Because everything is pointing downwards, we are losing money, and we keep trying to give the Executive Branch the same amount of money. It does not make sense. So, this is not a blame on anybody, but rather this is a challenge that let us come together and actually try and find the solution to this problem and stop blaming CCC, because if we want to do that, we can actually point to ourselves. We have been in this Legislature since the 23rd. Super majority, right? We are talking about the Administration, the House, the Senate, super majority, but nothing changed. We just keep pointing the finger on the previous administration, previous administration, previous... well, it is three years in, and if we are going to keep pointing the finger on the previous administration, then by golly, maybe the previous administration should run the administration because apparently, they are the only ones doing something. Again, this is just for us to come together and figure out how do we fix this problem. *Si Yu'us ma'ase*, Mr. Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. I recognize Senator Magofna.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Thank you, Chair. I guess we just need to, for me, while I hear the sentiments of Senators Babauta and Castro, and I agree wholeheartedly with the intent of what the Governor is trying to do. We all understand that there is no activity in the casino industry, but this whole thing that we are here right now, it is not about any of that. It is about the Executive Order and the way it was introduced and the basis for it. I think we need to focus on whether or not the way the Executive Order was issued and written is complied with our constitutional laws. Again, I support the Governor's intent on trying to streamline the process and all of that. I think we are all on the same page when it comes to that, but the real question is whether or not it was done the proper way. And so, I have mentioned a few things on here, on what this EO does, and I want the members to make note of some of the - I do not know if I should say - violations, the disregard of the existing law of what it mandates, and part of that is that the casino commissioners must be terminated with cause. Just by simply transferring them, transferring the responsibilities, the duties and responsibilities of the commission to a different body does not necessarily mean that is just cause for their termination. Also, the law 1856 requires that the commissioner should not be government employees. When we transfer these duties and responsibilities to the Lottery Commission, who are we transferring it to? We are transferring it to a body that are government employees; Secretary of Finance, Secretary of Commerce, Commissioner of DPS, and the AG is an elected official. And so, it is not a matter of whether we do not support or support the Governor, it is whether or not it was done the way it should have been done. And what would be the point of creating all the laws that we introduce if we ourselves are not going to follow those laws? It would be pointless. So, the focus should be whether or not the Executive Order met the... yes, the Governor has every authority to issue an Executive Order, but with boundaries. And to me, this is where we need to focus on whether or not the Governor exceeded his authority and colleagues, again, I humbly ask for your support to reject this Executive Order and let us do it the right way. Let us extend an offer to the Governor to sit down at the table with all the stakeholders, to include the House members, and let us talk about what we can do to streamline the process and make the necessary amendments on the existing law, if that is what we need to do. But I just do not believe that the Executive Order, in the manner it was done, was the proper way. That is all I have, Chair. I yield.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Senator Magofna. Any other members? Recognize Senator Castro.

Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro: I, at first, I wanted to commend Senator Nabors for the visionary leadership with the bill that opened up a digital economy advancement for the Municipality of Tinian. And the reason why I supported that is because of what is happening in the region and the factors in our island. We have limited natural resources. We do not have gold, we do not have trees we can cut down, we just have a small amount of land and people. But what that bill does and also, what that override allowed for is to access the world digitally, access the market, without people having to fly here. The challenge with the casino is the main source market is China and even the government of China put in a law to prevent their people from gambling outside of China. At the same time, you have economies like Japan that the exchange rate is not doing so well. The tariff situation further had an issue. So earlier we were talking about what other industries, so the digital economy advancement that Senator Nabors spearheaded, that is a really visionary focus. But at the same time, we have people in the manufacturing industry on island wanting to set up shop. The same reason why we had the garment factories during that time when

we had a really strong and robust economy is because of the tariffs. Again, the question that was posed, "what is there?" There is other ways to do this, and it is not exclusively a casino industry. Members, you know where I am going to vote. The people of specifically Saipan voted twice against this. But yes, we were in dire situation, but at the same time we ended up back in square one. So, I think I yield the rest of my time, but just please respect that there is no beef here, but I am going to vote the way I am going to vote. Thank you.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Senator Castro. I recognize the Vice President.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Floor Leader, and thank you Senator Castro. But I would be remiss if I were to accept the accommodation and praise because this digital economy and our stablecoin initiative was not a baby of mine, it was a baby of the Tinian Delegation, and I want to thank them. If we are going to thank me, we have to thank them because none of it would have worked without the other. Now, coming back to the subject at hand, I think another important component of what we are talking about that we are missing is this casino commission, no? The Commonwealth Casino Commission was created to be an autonomous department separate from the Executive Branch and from political influence specifically. Now, this Executive Order is going to fold into the very entity that is supposed to be apolitical members of the cabinet to represent them in the process moving forward. And again, this is contrary to the fundamental component of the enabling statute, which is why I plead with the members of the Legislature, if this is an issue that has come to the table and as legislators, identify all of the failure points in this mechanism and address them one by one so that the product still is intact, ensures that all the Senatorial Districts are represented as well as keeping the autonomous component of that agency in line. Because by folding it over, by taking an agency that was directly created to be separate from political influence and giving it to the Executive Branch, which is all appointed by the Governor, right now, through an Executive Order with no understanding of how this is going to take place. I will tell the members of the viewing public, at the end of our last session, we spoke to Commissioner DeLeon Guerrero, and to this date, there has been no attempt by the Lottery Commission to speak to the Casino Commission regarding this Executive Order. So again, all of these things are very concerning and should be very concerning for everybody. I am not opposed to making changes. If the Third Senatorial District is so inclined, again, what I offer is an opportunity to sit at a table and do this because the Legislature is the one that enabled this statute and if need be, we should be the body that addresses it. I yield my time, Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Vice President. Recognize Senator Babauta.

Senator Celina R. Babauta: Oh, thank you. Mr. Floor Leader. Just two comments. I think alluding to Senator Magofna's comments in the second round, about this is trying to do the right thing and everything. Come on. There has been arguments and debates and bills in this body, in this chamber, that those practices are only when it is convenient. For example, recently the inclusion of the backpay of the casino commissioners in an amended budget. And I tried to argue with reason and logic that they are in fact not government employees, but this body, because I do not have the votes, still voted to put their back pay into the amended budget. And basically, that is all I wanted to make comments on that this body, only when it is convenient, will apply their arguments. And many times, in that I have witnessed, that I have experienced, in this chamber, that logic and reason are put aside and based on numbers and alliances. And I get it. I respect

democracy. If anybody in here totally respects democracy and the power of one vote per member, it is I. My husband did not wear that uniform for me not to respect democracy. And I will continue to advocate for what is morally, logically, and rationally correct, based on my principles. Thank you, Mr. Floor Leader, and I yield. I am ready to vote.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Senator Babauta. Any other members? Just a closing comment before we rise back into session, I have heard arguments from the Senate President about representation of the districts and the lottery commission, or lack thereof, and as well as the Vice President recommending that we make changes to the existing law, in addition to the comments made by Senator Babauta and Senator Castro and their concerns of the rejection of the Executive Order. But there is one thing that I have learned as the Chairman of the Rota Legislative Delegation is that we have constantly been changing our local law that allows for a casino on Rota in order to address concerns from the community, as well as those of the commissioners, in trying to seek for a better alternative in trying to invite investors, but also to stop the bleeding, if you want to call it that. And when this EO initially came out, I was in support of it until I have heard arguments of how this should be done legislatively. We have addressed these concerns with the casino commissioners. They have shared, and as well as, you guys have read in the papers that there is an investor currently willing to invest and take over the responsibilities and some of the liabilities from IPI and that it is still with DPL and according to DPL, it is still with the AG's office. So, there is something coming down the line. But in regards to the issue that this is going back to the Lottery Commission and that is the commission that made these amendments, these are not the same commissioners that we had when the agreement was first agreed upon. And so, I think if ever the legislation were to come down with what we have read, coming from Representative Flores, that is something for the Legislature to consider. And that is something that I would support, not in how it is currently pre-filed, if it was already pre-filed, but there are some amendments that could be made. And these are stuff that we have asked the Casino Commission to provide and they did provide a list of amendments that we can consider in solidifying and strengthening the Public Law 1856 to make it more attractive to outside investors, as well as to be able to carry the work that is currently going on with the CCC in regards to the new investor that is willing to come in and take over the liabilities of IPI. One thing that we are learning right now with even just the Rota Casino Commission is that they have been working unpaid for these past couple of months, and they have issued a license to an investor right now trying to get things started up on Rota. And so, there is an opportunity for the Casino Commission to continue the work provided that they move quickly on any new investors but also, if any members would like to make amendments to even the salary portion, if that is a concern from the members or the community, that is something that, I am sure, this body can consider. And if any of the members would like to introduce a bill to amend 1856, I am very open to it. But like what the Vice President had mentioned, if this commission was created by statute, by legislation, then the same should be done to make changes to it and even to remove some of its power in the meantime or whatever the case may be from whatever is proposed by the members. And so, with that, I will be supporting the rejection provided that we have a lot of information that can be used to amend the current law, the current statute, to make the legislation or the Casino Commission operate in a way that saves money on the CNMI, but also continues to encourage and invite investors to invest in the CNMI. And so, with that, members, can I get a motion to rise back into session?

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Mr. Floor Leader, I would like to offer a motion to rise back into plenary session, so move.

The motion was seconded.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: There was a motion made and was seconded. Discussion?

Members voiced, "ready."

All in favor say aye.

All members voiced, "aye."

All opposed say nay.

The Senate dissolved from Committee of the Whole at 4:12 p.m.

We are now back in session and we take a short recess.

The Senate recessed at 4:12 p.m.

RECESS

The Senate reconvened at 4:15 p.m.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: We now rise back into session. We are in number seven of the Standing Committee Report. I recognize the Floor Leader

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Mr. President, there was a motion already made and was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: So, Clerk, call the roll.

Senator Celina R. Babauta: For clarification, can we repeat the motion?

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Floor Leader. Recognize Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Mr. President, the motion was for the adoption of Standing Committee Report 24-22.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	No
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	No
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, six (6) members voting yes, two (2) members voting no, one (1) absent.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With six members voting yes, Standing Committee Report No. 24-22 is hereby adopted. Moving on, item N.

REPORTS OF SPECIAL/CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

There is none. Item O, Resolution Calendar, recognize the Floor Leader.

RESOLUTION CALENDAR

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. At this time, I move for the adoption of Senate Resolution 24-06, "To disapprove Executive Order 2025-002, 'To transfer authority for supervision of casino gaming from the Commonwealth Casino Commission to the Commonwealth Lottery Commission pursuant to NMI Constitution Article III, Section 15.'"

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. There is a motion to adopt Senate Resolution No. 24-06 and it was seconded. Any discussion?

Ready.

Members voiced, "ready."

Ready? Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent

Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, six (6) members voting yes, two (2) members voting no.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With six members voting yes, Senate Resolution No. 24-06 is hereby adopted. Moving on, Bill Calendar.

BILL CALENDAR

Recognize the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Mr. President, we have Senate Bill No. 24-08, "To amend certain provisions of the CNMI Recycling Act of 1999 to establish the Department of Public Works as its proper authority; and for other purposes." I move for its passage.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Second.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. There is a motion to pass Senate Bill No. 24-08 and it was seconded. Any discussion? Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	Yes
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, all eight (8) members voting yes.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With eight members voting yes, Senate Bill No. 24-08 hereby passes the Senate. Floor Leader?

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Mr. President, we have Senate Bill No. 24-19, "To amend 9 CMC §2208(d) to authorize motor vehicle licensure to all residents of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands." I move for its passage.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Second.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. There is a motion to pass Senate Bill No. 24-19 and it was seconded. Any discussions? Recognize Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. The committee found that acquiring a valid driver's license in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands requires the presentation of relevant documents to confirm the applicant's lawful residency in the CNMI. Given our remote location and local restrictions in managing our immigration system, residents without proof of lawful presence in the CNMI have taken risk of driving a motor vehicle without a valid driver's license. This not only leads to a lack of auto insurance coverage for the safety of all motorists and pedestrians on CNMI roads, but also result in loss of revenue from unregistered vehicles and driver's license fees. The committee found that approximately 19 states, along with the District of Columbia, have enact legislation to allow unauthorized immigrants to obtain a driver's license, provided that the applicant can prove some form of documentation such as a foreign passport, a birth certificate, or a consular card, as well as proof of current residency in the state. And so, with that, members, I ask for your support of this legislation. As the committee have reported, this will not only ensure the safety of all motorists on the roads, but this would hopefully be one step forward in allowing for DPS to mandate or to go out and issue citations to all motorists provided that now everyone who is eligible over the age of 16 can obtain their driver's license, ensure their vehicles, get it inspected and registered and provide for more safer streets. And again, thank you for those who will be supporting this legislation. Thank you.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. Any other? Recognized Senator Karl King-Nabors.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to commend the author of the bill, Floor Leader Manglona, for actually putting pen to paper and authoring this bill, which some people might view as controversial. I tend to believe that it is a step in the right direction, especially as it relates to the public safety, ensuring that everybody over the age of 18 or 16 rather, can properly go provide the documents and get a driver's license. We did do an analysis, fiscal analysis, as it related to this, and though there might be some costs upfront, the long term projection is that we will gain more revenue as more people will now be paying for the driver's license fee. And with that, I yield.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Vice. Any other discussion? Recognize Senator Magofna.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Thank you, Mr. President. I would also like to commend the Senator for introducing this piece of legislation that, to some, might be controversial, but we already have individuals driving on the roads without driver's license. And, speaking of public safety, that should be a priority, too, and then it also adds revenues to DPS, but not just revenues to DPS, even the insurance companies. We want to make sure that if you are going to drive on the road, that you are properly insured, because should people get into accidents with no driver's license and no insurance, that could be another issue in itself. But thank you, Senator Donald, for taking action on this. I yield my time.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Senator Magofna. Any other members? Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	Yes
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, all eight (8) members voting yes.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With eight members voting yes, Senate Bill No. 24-19 hereby passes the Senate. Floor Leader?

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Next up, Mr. President, we have Senate Bill No. 24-21, "To amend 9 CMC § 2103 to require execution of a Notice of Transfer and Release of Liability by the appropriate parties upon the ownership transfer of a vehicle." I move for its passage.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. There is a motion offered to pass Senate Bill No. 24-21 and it was seconded. Any discussions by the members? Recognize Vice.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to, again, also commend the author, Senator Cruz, for this piece of legislation. What the committee found during our deliberations when we reached out to the Department of Public Safety for their comment is that they already have the framework, the paperwork, needed to do this. But when we looked at the actual statute and underlying obligation, it lacked any statutory backing. So, with this, it really does mandate the ownership and the title transfers, which is important again as people are driving

vehicles and selling vehicles, that everybody is aware of who the owner is. And in the event of an accident that the title on the insurance is rightfully transferred to the proper owner. I yield my time.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Vice President. Any other members?

Members voiced, "ready."

Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	Yes
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, all eight (8) members voting yes.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With eight members voting yes, Senate Bill No. 24-21 hereby passes the Senate. Floor Leader?

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Mr. President, up next, we have House Bill No. 24-2, "To establish a process for the delivery of a State of the Commonwealth Address to the Legislature by the Governor." I move for its passage.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. There is a motion to pass House Bill No. 24-2 and it was seconded. Any discussion by the members? Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes

Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, all eight (8) members voting yes.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With eight members voting yes, House Bill No. 24-02 hereby passes the Senate. Floor Leader?

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: And last on our Bill Calendar, we have House Bill No. 24-19, "To rename the 'CNMI Scholarship Office' to the 'CNMI Scholarship and Financial Assistance Office. "I move for its passage.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Second.

The motion was seconded.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Floor Leader. There is a motion to pass House Bill No. 24-19 and it was seconded. Any discussion by the members?

Members voiced, "ready."

Clerk, call the roll.

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors	Yes
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Dennis C. Mendiola (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, all eight (8) members voting yes.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. With eight members voting yes, House Bill No. 24-19 hereby passes the Senate. Moving on, item Q, Petitions, Memorials and Miscellaneous Communications, Clerk? Short recess.

The Senate recessed at 4:27 p.m.

RECESS

The Senate reconvened at 4:32 p.m.

We now rise back into session. Item Q, Clerk?

PETITIONS, MEMORIALS AND MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS

CLERK: Mr. President, we have three (3) on our agenda. 24-43, 44, and 45.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you, Clerk. Any discussions for the members? Moving on, item R, Announcement.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Anybody wishing to make an announcement? Go ahead, recognize Senator Hofschneider.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Thank you, Senate President. Just for the interest of discussion with the Concurrent Resolution, I believe the House just adopted it, of which everybody knows that the July 1st has come and gone and there was no amendment to the projection, so therefore, I will be notifying the committee members of a possible Fiscal Affairs Committee Meeting to discuss that, and I also extend it to any other member that wish to join us in that meeting. I am inclined to request the presence of the Secretary of Finance, MVA, OGM, and OMB to have a discussion with regards to the projection and maybe another agency, but I will announce that accordingly. I yield back.

President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you. Any other members? So, for my part, I just wanted to make an announcement on Legislative Initiative 24-01. Floor Leader, we are going to go ahead and hold off on the referral of that initiative and the reason for that is due to this recent letter by MPLT with the Administration or the Executive Branch requesting for a \$29 million pension obligation for the next Fiscal Year budget. It is quite alarming considering where we are at and that Legislative Initiative will, with this \$29 million, will just add a heavy burden on MPLT. So, I just wanted to announce that to the members that I am going to go ahead and hold off on that to make sure that the Fiscal Affairs does its diligence and make sure that this \$29 million request by the Administration is actually being thoroughly vetted. As some public comments were made, the Executive Branch has made an EDA loan, there was a 15 million loan. Some of the things that we just got to make sure is that we are able to sustain that payment in the next fiscal year. The fear is that with the economy pointing downwards, with all these MVA announcements on us not meeting or not even coming close to meeting pre-pandemic numbers, it is quite alarming for us to say that we have the necessary means to pay those obligations. So, I think it is incumbent of us and this body to make sure that when we deliberate on the fiscal year budget, that, this is one of the considerations that the members of that committee vet thoroughly. Again, so Floor Leader, we are going to go ahead and hold off on that. This is not to disqualify that initiative, but to ensure that we address the fiscal year budget with this \$29 million request by the Administration. Thank you. Any other announcement? Moving on, item S, Adjournment. Floor Leader?

ADJOURNMENT

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Mr. President, I move for adjournment subject to your call.

Vice President Karl R. King-Nabors: Second.

The motion was seconded.

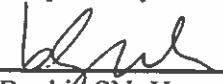
President Dennis C. Mendiola: Thank you. Crew, that was a long session, one of the longest sessions we have had but I appreciate you guys' patience. There is a motion offered by the Floor Leader to adjourn and it was seconded. All those in favor say aye.

All members voiced, "aye."

All those opposed say nay. Motion carries. Today's session is hereby adjourned.

Senate session adjourned at 4:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Baybie SN. Hocog
Journal Clerk