

THE SENATE TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE



SENATE JOURNAL

THIRD REGULAR SESSION – 2026

SJ 24-20

1st Day.

Friday, January 16, 2026

In compliance with the Open Government Act, Senate President, Karl R. King-Nabors, issued a session call on January 09, 2026 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 President of the Senate, Karl R. King-Nabors presided.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Good afternoon everyone. I do apologize again, once more for the temporary delay. We were waiting on some last-minute communications to be added to today's Agenda. Good afternoon, I hereby call today's 1st Day, Third Regular Senate Session to order. Today is January 16, 2026, the time is 1:22 p.m. in the afternoon, here at the Senate Chamber of the Vice Speaker Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building, Capitol Hill Saipan. It is my pleasure to welcome everybody this afternoon. I would like to take this opportunity to kindly ask those with mobile devices to please put them on silent or to mute them, so as they don't disrupt the proceedings. I also like to welcome everybody who is viewing on cable television Channel 23, the Senate YouTube page, and the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature Facebook page. And with that, I'd like to ask that we all rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silent prayer was observed.

Clerk please call the roll.

ROLL CALL

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	Absent – Excused
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent – Excused
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	<i>Esti guiha</i> (Present)
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Here
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Gaige</i> (Here)

Senator Karl R. King-Nabors (President)	Here
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Present
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Present
Senator Paul A. Manglona	Here

CLERK: Mr. President, seven (7) members are present and two (2) members absent.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: With seven members present, we have the requisite number to proceed with today's Session. Please let the record reflect that Senators Babauta and Calvo are hereby excused from today's Senate Session and Vice President Magofna is attending virtually. And before we move on to Public Comment, I would like to recognize our Floor Leader for some requisite motions.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. At this time, I move to amend the Agenda to include Miscellaneous Communication No. 24-08.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

This motion has been seconded.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: There has been a motion for the addition to today's agenda of Miscellaneous Communication No. 24-08, and has been seconded. Discussion? Being that we're amending the agenda, I would like to please ask the Clerk to call the roll.

ROLL CALL

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

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

CLERK: Mr. President, all seven (7) members present voting “yes”.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: With all members voting “yes”, Miscellaneous Communications No. 24-08 is hereby added to today's agenda. Okay. Moving on to Public

Comment. This is a section of our agenda where we allow the public to provide any comments that are pertinent to today's agenda. Please identify yourself and keep the public comments to about five minutes. Public comments are now open. Thank you.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jean Paul P. Reyes: Good afternoon, *Håfa adai yan Tirow*, Honorable Senate President Karl King-Nabors and Honorable Senate Members of the 24th Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature. For the record, my name is Jean Paul B. Reyes, Special Assistant for the Administration under the Office of the Governor. On behalf of the Honorable Governor David M. Apatang and the Honorable Lieutenant Governor Dennis James C. Mendiola, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. Mr. Senate President, I am honored to extend the Administration's appreciation and express our gratitude to the Honorable Senate Members that are present here today. And to your Committee on Executive Appointments and Government Investigations Committee chaired by the Honorable Senator, Mr. Francisco Q. Cruz, for the time and effort you've all put into reviewing and examining the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor's nominees. This afternoon, you'll be entertaining Senate Standing Committee Report No. 24-45, the Executive Appointment of Mr. Matthew B. Stuart, professionally known as Vin Armani to serve as a member for the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District; Senate Standing Committee Report No. 24-46, the Executive Appointment of Ms. Carline B. Sablan to serve as a member for the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District; Senate Standing Committee Report No. 24-47, the Executive Appointment of Mr. Juan S. Salas to serve as a member for the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District; Senate Standing Committee Report No. 24-48, the Executive Appointment of Mr. Vincent N. Camacho to serve as a member for the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District and the Carolinian Community. And lastly, Senate Standing Committee Report No. 24-49, the Executive Appointment on Mr. James Ushio Miyahara Mendiola, Jr. to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, representing the Second Senatorial District. Your relentless time and effort on entertaining our nominees is an essential step forward as the Administration finalizes the vacancies for all Boards and Commission. Once again, Honorable Senate President King-Nabors and Honorable Members of this esteemed Senate body, Governor David M. Apatang and Lieutenant Governor Dennis James C. Mendiola extends their sincere appreciation for your generous and favorable consideration on behalf of our nominees who have accepted additional commitments to serving our great Commonwealth. Thank you, *si yu'us ma'ase yan ghilisow* Mr. President.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: *Si yu'us ma'ase* Mr. Reyes. Public Comment is still open to the members. If there are none, Public Comment is hereby closed. If there are no objections from the members, I would like to jump around the agenda a little bit, today we are running a little late and I would kindly ask that we go to Item O on the Resolution Calendar. No objections?

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: No objections.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: And with that, I recognize the Floor Leader.

RESOLUTION CALENDAR:

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. At this time, I moved to adopt Senate Resolution No. 24-11, “To honor the distinguished service of Chief Warrant Officer Four Rosannie Castro McGee upon her retirement from the United States Army, and to commend her exemplary leadership, unwavering, and outstanding contributions to the defense of our nation.”

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Do I hear a second?

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

This motion has been seconded.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: So there has been a motion for the adoption of Senate Resolution No. 24-11, and has been seconded. Under discussions. Ready? Clerk, please call the roll.

ROLL CALL

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

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

CLERK: Mr. President, all seven (7) members present voting “yes”.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: With all members voting “yes”, Senate Resolution No. 24-11 is hereby adopted by the Senate. Short recess please.

The Senate recessed at 1:30 p.m.

RECESS

The Senate reconvened at 1:35 p.m.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Moving on our agenda, if there are no objections from the members I would like to go to Item M, Reports of Standing Committees. And with that, I recognize the Floor Leader.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. We have Standing Committee Report No. 24-49 from the Executive Appointments and Government Investigations reporting on the Executive Appointment of Mr. James Ushio Miyahara Mendiola Jr. to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, representing the Second Senatorial District. I move for its adoption.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

This motion has been seconded.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: And before we go ahead and dispose, if you don't mind, may I ask that the candidate or the appointee be brought in. Thank you so much, Mr. Mendiola. So, there's been a motion for the adoption of Standing Committee Report No. 24-49 and has been seconded. Under discussion. I recognize the Chairman of EAGI, Senator Cruz.

Senator Francisco Q. Cruz: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, your Committee on Executive Appointments and Government Investigations is ready to present Standing Committee Report No. 24-49, and this is the Executive Appointment of Mr. James Ushio Miyahara Mendiola Jr. to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, representing the Second Senatorial District. Your Committee on Executive Appointments and Government Investigations to which was referred the appointment of Mr. James Ushio Miyahara Mendiola, Jr. to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, representing the Second Senatorial District, begs leave to report as follow. After review and consideration of testimonies provided, your Committee recommends the confirmation of Mr. James Mendiola Jr's Executive Appointment to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, representing the Second Senatorial District. Pursuant to Rule 8, Section 5 of the Interim Rules of the Senate, it is the duty and purpose of your Committee to report to the Senate for legislative action on the appointment of Mr. James Ushio Miyahara Mendiola Jr. to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, representing the Second Senatorial District. Your Committee has examined pertinent documents relating to the Executive Appointment of Mr. Mendiola Jr's overall credential to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission. In summation of all written and oral testimonies provided to the Committee, there are six oral testimonies in support of the Appointee of which, two hard copies of the testimonies stated was submitted during the hearing, two written testimonies in support of the Appointee and no written or oral testimonies in opposition of the Appointee. Additionally, your Committee stated several recommendations, issues, and concerns to the Appointee that are included in this report. Therefore, based on the overall assessment of Mr. Mendiola's credentials, experiences, testimonies, and other relevant issues considered, your Committee respectfully recommends the

confirmation of Mr. James Ushio Miyahara Mendiola Jr. to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, representing the Second Senatorial District. The public hearing was conducted on December 18, 2025 in Tinian Public Library San Jose, Tinian. And during the hearing, certain recommendations, issues, and concern were raised for the Appointee to address and look into if confirm as a member of the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission. And in conclusion, all required documents in conformance with Rule 8, Section 5 of the Interim Rules of the Senate have been submitted to your Committee for review and consideration. And based on the submission of pertinent documents and testimonies, your Committee concludes that the Executive Appointment of Mr. James Ushio Miyahara Mendiola Jr. to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, representing the Second Senatorial District is in accordance with 4 CMC § 8403. Therefore, your Committee consents the confirmation of Mr. James Ushio Miyahara Mendiola Jr. to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, representing the Second Senatorial District. Again, I ask this body to kindly support Standing Committee Report No. 24-49. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you. Senator Cruz. Still under discussion, any members? I recognize Senator Manglona.

Senator Paul A. Manglona: Thank you Mr. President. I am not a member of the Committee on EAGI, so I just want to [give] a very short comment. I'm in support of the committee report, but at this point I want to recognize a gentleman in the back, the Chairman of PUC, Mr. Sirok. I don't know if there's other members there, but I think of PUC as the referee in the utility game. We know it's not a game but they're the ones that keep everything on the up and up as far as the consumer's interests. And I want to recognize their efforts, PUC's effort in, as far as like net metering, evaluating the FAC rate and looking over procurements by CUC to make sure that whatever they do, it's in the best interest of the public. And I encourage them to continue doing that. And I know that you're going to be joining Mr. Mendiola and organize with members that are committed to protecting our consumers. So, I'm ready for the report. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senator Manglona. Any other members? I would just like to keep mine brief, if I may. I just wanted to thank the Appointee for coming back, and as he said during his hearing, volunteering his time and efforts to try to do our best to progress the CNMI forward in its time of need. And again, thank you sincerely from the bottom of my heart. And with that, I'd like to have the Clerk please call the roll.

ROLL CALL

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

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

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

CLERK: Mr. President, all seven (7) members present voting “yes”.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: With all members voting “yes”, Standing Committee Report No. 24-49 is hereby adopted officially appointing Mr. James Ushio Miyahara Mendiola Jr. to serve as the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, representing the Second Senatorial District. Thank you. With that, I recognize the Floor Leader. If we could call Mr. Armani up into the gallery, please. Okay. I recognize the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. We have Standing Committee Report No. 24-45 from the Executive Appointments and Government Investigations reporting on the Executive Appointment of Mr. Matthew B. Stuart IV, professionally known as Vin Armani, to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District. I move for its adoption.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

This motion has been seconded.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: There's been a motion for the adoption of Standing Committee Report No. 24-45 and has been seconded. Under discussion, I recognize the Chairman of EAGI, Senator Cruz.

Senator Francisco Q. Cruz: Thank you Mr. President. This is second Standing Committee Report. The Committee is ready to report to the body and this is Standing Committee Report No. 24-45, the Executive Appointment of Mr. Matthew B. Stuart, also known as Vin Armani, to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District. Again Mr. President, your Committee on Executive Appointments and Government Investigations to which was referred the appointment of Mr. Matthew B. Stuart to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District, beg leave to report as follows. After review and consideration of the testimonies provided to your Committee, the Committee recommends the confirmation of Mr. Matthew B. Stuart's Executive Appointment to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District. Pursuant to Rule 8, Section 5 of the Interim Rules of the Senate, it is the duty and purpose of your Committee to report to the Senate for legislative action on the appointment of Mr. Matthew B. Stuart to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District. Your Committee has examined pertinent documents relating to the Executive Appointment of Mr. Stuart's overall

credentials to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority Board of Directors. And in summation of all written and oral testimonies provided to the Committee, there are four oral testimonies in support of the Appointee, of which one hard copy of testimonies stated was submitted during the hearing, four written testimonies in support of the Appointee, and no written or oral testimonies in opposition of the Appointee. Additionally, your Committee stated several recommendations, issues and concern to the Appointee that are included in this report. Therefore, based on the overall assessment of Mr. Stuart's overall credentials, experiences, testimonies, and other relevant issues considered, your Committee respectfully recommends the confirmation of Mr. Matthew B. Stuart to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District. The public hearing was conducted here at the Senate Chamber of the Honorable Vice Speaker Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building on September 15, 2025. And during the hearing, certain recommendations, issues, and concerns were raised for the Appointee to address and look into if confirmed as a member of the Commonwealth Economic Development [Authority] Board of Directors. And in conclusion, all required documents in conformance with Rule 8, Section 5 of the Interim Rules of the Senate have been submitted to your Committee for review and consideration. And based on the submission of pertinent documents and testimony, your Committee concludes that the Executive Appointment of Mr. Matthew B. Stuart IV, to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District, is in accordance with 4 CMC §10301. Therefore, your Committee consents the confirmation of Mr. Matthew B. Stuart to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District. Again, I ask this body to support Standing Committee Report No. 24-45. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senator Cruz. Under discussion. Any other members? I recognize Senator Manglona.

Senator Paul A. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. I know Vin and I'm ready again to support the Committee's recommendation. But I just want to thank you for accepting this appointment, I know it calls for a lot of meetings and talking about how to address our economy. But I just want to point out, because I met with some people this morning and I know we talk a lot about incentives for businesses, new businesses, how to entice them to come here, Vin. But this meeting this morning was from local businesses owners, and they're saying, "You guys up in the Legislature, what are you doing? You're supposed to also look at the existing businesses on the islands because they're shutting down. What are you doing to help these businesses?" So that's my two cents there. For you to also consider those businesses that are here, about to shut down, about to lay off people. So, I know you, you can handle that, you can look into that. *Enao ha'*. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senator Manglona. Any other members? I would like to give my brief remarks. I would like to say thank you to Mr. Armani, Mr. Stuart IV. We've known each other for a couple years now, and I don't take lightly the efforts that you've undertaken in the different various manners that you've tried to assimilate our economic growth and diversification. I look forward to working with you in the future as you progress. Thank you again for accepting the appointment. And with that, I'd like to ask the Clerk to please call the roll.

ROLL CALL

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

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

CLERK: Mr. President, all seven (7) members present voting “yes”.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: With all members voting “yes”, Standing Committee Report No. 24-45 is hereby adopted officially appointing Mr. Matthew B. Stuart IV to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District. Congratulations. And if I could for the remaining Board members for CPA, if we could ask that they all be brought into the chamber for the committee reports. Good afternoon, everyone. And with that, we will move on to Item 2, on agenda Item M. And I recognize the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. We have Standing Committee Report No. 24-46 from the Executive Appointments and Government Investigations reporting on the Executive Appointment of Ms. Carline B. Sablan to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District. I move for its adoption.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

This motion has been seconded.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: There has been a motion for the adoption of Standing Committee Report No. 24-46, and has been seconded under discussion. I recognize the Chairman of EAGI, Senator Cruz.

Senator Francisco Q. Cruz: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, this is the third Committee Report from your Committee on Executive Appointments and Government Investigations that is ready to report to this body. And this is Standing Committee Report No. 24-46, the Executive Appointment on Ms. Carline B. Sablan to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Director, representing the Third Senatorial District. Again, your Committee on Executive Appointments and Government Investigations to which was referred the appointment

of Ms. Carline B. Sablan to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District, begs leave to report as follows. After review and consideration of testimonies provided, your Committee recommends the confirmation of Ms. Carline B. Sablan's Executive Appointment to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District. And Pursuant to Rule 8, Section 5 of the Interim Rules of the Senate, it is the duty and purpose of your Committee to report to the Senate for legislative action pertaining to the appointment of Ms. Carline B. Sablan to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District. Your Committee has examined all pertinent documents relating to the Executive Appointment of Ms. Sablan's overall credentials to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors. And in summation of all written and oral testimonies provided to the Committee, there are seven oral testimonies in support of the Appointee, of which five hard copies of the testimonies were submitted during the hearing, twelve written testimonies in support of the Appointee, and no written or oral testimonies in opposition to the Appointee. Additionally, your Committee stated several recommendations, issues and concerns of the Appointee are included in this report. Therefore, based on the overall assessment of Ms. Sablan's credentials, experiences, testimonies, and other relevant issues considered, your Committee respectfully recommends the confirmation of Ms. Carline B. Sablan to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District. The public hearing was conducted here in the Honorable Vice Speaker Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building on December 15, 2025. And during the hearing, certain recommendations, issues and concerns were raised for the Appointee accompanied by CPA Board of Director Appointee, Juan S. Salas and Vincent N. Camacho Jr., to address and look into if confirmed as members of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors. And in conclusion all required documents in conformance with Rule 8, Section 5 of the Interim Rules of the Senate have been submitted to your Committee for review and consideration. And based on the submission of pertinent documents and testimonies, your Committee concludes that the Executive Appointment of Ms. Carline B. Sablan to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District is in accordance with 2 CMC § 2123. Therefore, your Committee consents to the confirmation of Ms. Carline B. Sablan to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District. Again, I ask this body to support Standing Committee Report No. 24-46. And again, as I mentioned during the hearing Ms. Sablan, I addressed in regards to the Tinian fire truck that is very, it is necessary that to have a sufficient and an infected fire truck because there's a lot of military activity going on and we need a sufficient equipment for the staff to respond to any call in regards to any incident that occurred at that port. Again, I appreciate your patience and understanding on that matter. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senator Cruz. Discussion is still open. I recognize Senator Manglona.

Senator Paul A. Manglona: *Si yu'us ma'ase* Mr. President. *Bai hu na kâdada' esti ha. Banidosu yu ni esti tres na* nominee. *Hu sangan esti gi yoña* public hearing. *Lao kumakumen-hu pa'go sa hu taitai i* committee report. *Bunitu na* committee report, *lao magahet ti klaru hafa siha palabra-hu gi na* hearing. *Ya* for the record, *malagu-yu para hu sanggan taiguene na, finéne'na ya bai hu na'i dânkolo na si yu'us ma'ase si Ester, i* CEO, *hu komprendi na esta ma sangani paoma ha ma preba*

komu ma halom todū i permitting *gi eyi i* roll on, roll off *na* operation *gi* West Harbor, which is very critical *nei sa* that will go a long way in dropping the cost of commodities on Rota, because now, with the lack of crane and all that, a shipping vessel can go right to the dock and roll on, roll off operation without a need for the crane. So, I acknowledge the help of the CEO and the staff at CPA. So, there are several concerns on Rota, and I hope that shortly after your confirmation, you get a chance to go down there and we really ask for your help. *Guini gi bādan i* airports and seaport, *noh*. At the airport now, there are two projects that are pending and I think it's, I don't know if it's unreasonably delayed, but one project that should be started already is *eyi i* APRON parking. I think that's, I don't know, \$4 million. It's been signed, pending. I don't know if it's procurement matters, but I hope that they can resolve that because we need activity, construction activity down on Rota. As well as the roofing, which is about \$7 to \$8 million funding and that should have been started also, *ti hu tunngo hafa* pending, but the more we can get our projects moving, economic activity you know so, I appreciate your help to look into these matters. So, thank you, Chairman. Good committee report, but it is not in there and I just want to put that in there, *noh*. Thank you.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senator Paul for that clarification. I recognize Senator Hofschneider.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: *Si yu'us ma'ase* Mr. President. *Buenas tatdes para todū man gaige guini. Espesiatmente i* appointees. *Malago' ha yu para bai ekstendi agradesimiento ni na guaha tiempon miyu, ni bai hu fan na li'e*, some of the members of the Senate, *pot guaha na asunto siha noh*, pending *i CPA ya guaha rekomendasion*. *Guaha unu malago' yu bai hu mensiona* on record, *para ta un revisit todū esti siha yon miyu* properties *gi halom CNMI. Lekku na* between *i* airport, seaport and the MVA, you guys are the critical entities to the livelihood of the CNMI, other than the, all the laws, and the incentive. So, I think the ports is very critical. The visitor's authority is right there. I encourage the soon to be Board members to dig deep and work with our tourism industry and including how to figure out a way to entice clients or, and I know you guys are doing it, but more how do we land concessionaire with the Saipan airport, Tinian airport and Rota Airport for that matter, because it is very, very critical. Just not too long ago, we authorized a legislation eventually became law to co-mingle seaport and airport funds. It's never been done before. I think when, since it was created, the CPA was created it's never been tinkered before. Only this Legislature that was done. So that's all telling us to the criticalness of the ports as well as the CNMI in general. Last but not the least, I do know that this is Tinian matter, but I respectfully ask that you revisit the previous Board's decision to name the airport after Francisco Manglona Borja. Please revisit that decision by the Board then, and move forward with the installation of the sign. So, with that, Mr. President I yield. *Si yu'us ma'ase iyon miyu* volunteerism.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senator Hofschneider. Any other members? I recognize Senator Castro.

Senator Manny G.T. Castro: Thank you, Mr. President. Just in line with what was said by Senator Hofschneider, I just wanted to thank the Board for considering this post. The airports and seaports are a gateway to our Commonwealth, let us not forget also the different municipalities, maybe even Sugar Dock. But from a commerce standpoint, we're seeing all the cruise ships coming in. And I hope that, it may not be a popular thing right now, but it's very important that our decision

makers, such as yourselves, look at our competition. These other areas where the cruise ships are going to, we have to know our market and we have to know especially those areas that are really successful in bringing in cruise ships. What kind of infrastructure and amenities are available when the passengers arrive on island? Cause right now our seaport's pretty bare. The pathway is there, but there's no concession. I wanted to give a shout out to all the different agencies that do make it better than what it is right now. Like with all the performances and the welcoming, but at the same time, infrastructure wise, we can do better. All the economies in the world, when it wasn't doing too well, the government spent in infrastructure that helped build the cash flow. Please look into that and again, thank you for your service.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you. Senator Castro. Any other members? Ready? Clerk, please call the roll.

ROLL CALL

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

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

CLERK: Mr. President, all seven (7) members present voting “yes”.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: With all members voting “yes”, Standing Committee Report No. 24-46 is hereby adopted by the Senate officially confirming Ms. Carline B. Sablan to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District. Congratulations. I recognize the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Mr. President, we have Standing Committee Report No. 24-47 from the Executive Appointments and Government Investigations reporting on the Executive Appointment on Mr. Juan S. Salas to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District. I move for its adoption.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

This motion has been seconded.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: There has been a motion for the adoption of Standing Committee Report No. 24-47 and has been seconded. Under discussion, I recognize the Chairman of EAGI, Senator Cruz.

Senator Francisco Q. Cruz: Thank you Mr. President. This is the fourth Standing Committee Report under the EAGI committee and it is ready to report to this body. And this is Standing Committee Report No. 24-47, the Executive Appointment of Mr. Juan S. Salas to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District. Again, your Committee on Executive Appointments and Government Investigations to which was referred the appointment of Mr. Juan S. Salas to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District beg leaves to report as follows. After review and consideration of the testimonies provided, your Committee recommends the confirmation of Mr. Salas' Executive Appointment to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District. Pursuant to Rule 8, Section 5 of the Interim Rules of the Senate, it is the duty and purpose of your Committee to report to the Senate for legislative action on the appointment of Mr. Juan S. Salas to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District. Your Committee has examined all pertinent documents relating to the Executive Appointment of Mr. Salas' overall credentials to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors. And in summation of all written and oral testimonies provided to the Committee, there are six testimonies in support of the Appointee, of which three hard copies of the testimonies were submitted during the hearing, four written testimonies in support of the Appointee, and no written or oral testimonies in opposition of the Appointee. Additionally, your Committee stated several recommendations, issues and concern to the Appointee that are included in this report. Therefore, based on the overall assessment of Mr. Salas' credential, experiences, testimonies, and other relevant issues considered, your Committee respectfully recommends the confirmation of Mr. Juan S. Salas to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District. The public hearing was conducted on December 15, 2025 here in the Senate Chamber of the Vice Speaker Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building. And during the hearing certain recommendations, issues, and concerns were raised for the appointee accompanied by CPA Board of Director appointees, Ms. Carline B. Sablan and Mr. Vincent N. Camacho Jr., to address and look into if confirmed as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors. And in conclusion, all required documents in conformance with Rule 8, Section 5 of the Interim Rules of the Senate have been submitted to your Committee for review and consideration. And based on the submission of pertinent documents and testimonies, your Committee concludes that the Executive Appointment of Mr. Juan S. Salas to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District, is in accordance with 2 CMC §2123. Therefore, your Committee consents the confirmation of Mr. Juan S. Salas to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District. Again, I ask this body to support Standing Committee Report No. 24-47. And again, Mr. Salas, as I mentioned to Ms. Carline Sablan, the same concern. Hopefully you can try and resolve whatever matters that pertaining to the necessity in responding efficiently to any incident that might occur at any port. And as well as what Senator Paul have mentioned, try and address those concerns if you are given the blessing of this body, thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. I yield back.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you. Chairman Cruz. The floor is still open for discussion for the other members. Being none, Clerk please call the roll.

ROLL CALL

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

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

CLERK: Mr. President, all seven (7) members present voting “yes”.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: With all members voting “yes”, Standing Committee Report No. 24-47 is hereby adopted by the Senate officially appointing Mr. Juan S. Salas to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District. Congratulations. I recognize the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President, we have Standing Committee Report No. 24-48, from the Executive Appointments and Government Investigations reporting on the Executive Appointment of Mr. Vincent N. Camacho to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District and the Carolinian Community. I move for its adoption.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

This motion has been seconded.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: There has been a motion for the adoption of Standing Committee Report No. 24-48 and has been seconded. Under discussion. Recognized Chairman of EAGI, Senator Cruz.

Senator Francisco Q. Cruz: Thank you Mr. President. This is the fifth and last Committee Report from the Executive Appointments and Government Investigations Committee, and this is the Standing Committee Report No. 24-48. This is the Executive Appointment of Mr. Vincent N.

Camacho Jr. to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District and the Carolinian Community. Mr. President your Committee on Executive Appointments and Government Investigations to which was referred the appointment of Mr. Vincent N. Camacho Jr. to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District and the Carolinian Community, begs leave to report as follows. After review and consideration of the testimonies provided, the Committee recommends the confirmation of Mr. Vincent N. Camacho Jr.'s Executive Appointment to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District and the Carolinian Community. Pursuant to Rule 8, Section 5 of the Interim Rules of the Senate, it is the duty and purpose of your Committee to report to the Senate for legislative action on the appointment of Mr. Vincent N. Camacho Jr. to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District and the Carolinian Community. Your Committee has examined all pertinent documents relating to the Executive Appointment of Mr. Camacho Jr.'s overall credentials to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors. And in summation of all written and oral testimonies provided to the Committee, there are six oral testimonies in support of the Appointee, of which three hard copies of the testimonies were submitted during the hearing, one written testimony in support of the Appointee, and no written or oral testimonies in opposition of the Appointee. Additionally, your Committee stated several recommendations, issues, and concerns to the Appointee that are included in this report. Therefore, based on the overall assessment of Mr. Camacho Jr's credentials, experiences, testimonies, and other relevant issues considered, your Committee respectfully recommends the confirmation of Mr. Vincent N. Camacho Jr. to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors representing the Third Senatorial District and the Carolinian Community. The public hearing was conducted on December 15, 2025, here in the Senate Chamber of the Vice Speaker Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building. And during the hearing, certain recommendations, issues, and concerns were raised for Appointee, accompanied by CPA Board of Directors appointees, Ms. Carline B. Sablan and Mr. Juan S. Salas to address and look into if confirmed as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors. And in conclusion, all required documents in conformance with Rule 8, Section 5 of the Interim Rules of the Senate have been submitted to your Committee for review and consideration. And based on the submission of pertinent documents and testimonies, your Committee concludes that the Executive Appointment of Mr. Vincent N. Camacho Jr. to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District and the Carolinian Community is in accordance with 2 CMC § 2123. Therefore, your Committee consents the confirmation of Mr. Vincent N. Camacho Jr. to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District and the Carolinian Community. Again, ask this body to support Standing Committee Report No. 24-48. And again Mr. Camacho, the same thing that I addressed to the two that have already been confirmed, hopefully that you guys can be able to work together and address those issues. The reason why I continue to say this because to avoid any future liability against CPA. By not responding to any incident on the runway, on a timely manner. Again, I humbly ask that you look into that once you guys start your work and be able to work together with the other sitting members and especially the hardworking staff of CPA. Again, I thank you and I appreciate your patient understanding. I yield back Mr. President.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senator Cruz. Recognized the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to reserve my comments until we go over all the nominees. I can't emphasize enough the need for all the Board members to at least come down to Rota and hopefully the airport issue is of your top priority. Like I've mentioned in the hearing every time I go down that sectioned area that's closed off keeps getting bigger and bigger, and it's becoming a hazard to not just the people that work there, but the traveling public. But most importantly, our Leadership has worked very hard in trying to create this image of Rota and how beautiful it is, but the last thing that they see when leaving is this eyesore that, seems to be, I don't know what's going on, but I think that one of the action that's needed is for the Board to be able to hold quorum and I hope that one of the first things that you guys do when you get there is come down the Rota and see what can be done to get that issue resolved. I know there were concerns regarding protests, but this is an emergency situation where we're putting a lot of our people's lives at risk and that we want to leave a lasting impression on the visiting public to come back and not see this issue still being left unresolved. And so, with that, I congratulate all of you on your confirmation, Mr. Camacho, soon to be confirmed. And if there's anything that we can do to assist in terms of funding... as Senator Jude has mentioned, we've been supportive of the CPA's ability to use the seaport revenues as a way to offset some of the unfunded operational costs that the airport is incurring and I'd be more than happy to assist any way we can. And with that, Mr. President, I yield.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Floor Leader. Any other members? I too wanted to reserve my comments before the end. First off, I want to thank all of you for taking the opportunity to serve in this capacity, in this role. None of the Boards and Commissions are easy. Yours rank arguably among the most difficult, and a lot of the issues are external to the actual agency that you represent and that you will sit as a board member of. So, I fully understand some of the hardships and difficult decisions that you will make in the near future. I ask that you take into consideration all of the constructive points that the members have offered throughout the interview process as well as today's session. As they do mean a lot to the people for whom, which they represent. Similarly, to us on Tinian, that there was a public hearing that was had by the Board at that time to rename the airport and my understanding is it is currently recognized as Francisco M. Borja Airport. But to this day, we have no signage to represent and honor the individual for whom the people of Tinian had wanted it to be named after. Same with the issues that Senator Manglona has brought up. These are not new issues, these are longstanding issues, but I do understand that none of you have a magic wand that can just wave around and find the money and resources to adequately address these issues and that I get, but so long as we can continue to work together to move the CNMI forward, I'm so thankful for again, your acceptance and congratulations. No other members? With that I will go ahead and ask the Clerk to please call the roll.

ROLL CALL

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

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

Senator Corina L. Magofna	Yes
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Paul A. Manglona	Yes
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors (President)	Yes

CLERK: Mr. President, all seven (7) members voting “yes”.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: With all members voting “yes”, Standing Committee Report No. 24-48 is hereby adopted by the Senate, officially confirming Mr. Vincent N. Camacho to serve as a member of the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, representing the Third Senatorial District and the Carolinian Community. Congratulations. Short recess, please.

The Senate recessed at 2:20 p.m.

RECESS

The Senate reconvened at 2:50 p.m.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: We now rise back to Session and before we proceed any further onto our agenda item, I did want to take this opportunity to recognize our LB staff that has been assisting with our Session today. With us today, our Senate Legal Counsels Joe Bermudes and Antonette Villagomez, Senior Legislative Assistant Mrs. Jolyn Duenas-Tagabuel, Legislative Assistant Devin Macaranas, our IT Assistant Mr. Delbert Camacho, our Assistant Sergeant-At-Arms Jonathan DeLeon Guerrero. Also, here earlier with us was Mr. John Luis Castro, Luis John Castro rather, assisting us with our media and our Senate Journal Clerk Mrs. Valerie Aguon. Now moving on, I would like to recognize the Floor Leader for the reading and approval of the Journals.

READING AND APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL:

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. At this I move for the adoption of Senate Journal No. 24-18, dated 9th day, Second Regular Session. Sorry, dated December 22, 2025, and Senate Journal No. 24-19, First Emergency Session dated December 31, 2025. I move for its adoption.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

This motion has been seconded.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: There has been a motion for the adoption of Senate Journal No. 24-18 and 24-19 and has been seconded. Discussion. Ready? All in favor say “aye”.

Members present voiced “aye”.

All opposed? Senate Journals No. 24-18 and 19 are hereby adopted by the Senate. I'd like to recognize the Floor Leader for the proper motion.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. I also move to, I offer a motion to suspend pertinent rules to accept Governor's Communication. Sorry to amend the agenda to include Governor's Communication No. 24-173.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

This motion has been seconded.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: There has been a motion for the addition to today's agenda of Governor's Message No. 24-173 and has been seconded. Discussion? With that, Clerk please call the roll.

ROLL CALL

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

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

CLERK: Mr. President, all seven (7) members present voting “yes”.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: With all members voting “yes”, Governor's Message No. 24-173, regarding Executive Order 2025-005 is hereby added to today's agenda. Recognized the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you again, Mr. President. At this time, I move to suspend pertinent rules to allow for action on Governor's Communication No. 24-173.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

This motion has been seconded.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: There has been a motion to suspend pertinent rules to allow for action on Governor's Message No. 24-173 and has been seconded. Discussion. Ready? Clerk, please call the roll.

ROLL CALL

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

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

CLERK: Mr. President, all seven (7) members present voting “yes”.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Clerk. With all members voting “yes”, the pertinent rules are hereby suspended and allows for action on the Governor's Message. Moving on to Messages from the Governor. I recognize the Clerk.

Clerk: Mr. President, we have 15 items on the agenda. Governor's Message No. 24-194 to 24-208, and please note number six should read “FY 2025 Annual Report.” Sorry.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you Clerk. And with that, open for discussion. Short recess please.

The Senate recessed at 2:55 p.m.

RECESS

The Senate reconvened at 2:57 p.m.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: We now rise back to session and under Governor's Communications, I would like to refer to Governor’s Communication No. 24-173, and I would like to recognize our Legal Counsel.

Counsel Antonette R. Villagomez: Good afternoon, President and Members. I was asked to review Executive Order 2025-005, which is the Executive Order that transferred the Cannabis Commission to the ABTC Division of the Department of Commerce. The Executive Order,

basically did three things. First, it transferred the duties and responsibilities of the Cannabis Commission to the ABTC Division of the Department of Commerce, and then it terminated the Commissioners of the Cannabis Commission based on the transfer and number three, the Managing Director and staff of the Commission were also transferred to the Department of Commerce under the authority of the Secretary of Commerce. The Governor justified the Executive Order by stating that as of July 31, 2025, the Cannabis Commission reported a total of Fiscal Year 2025 Year-to-Date taxes of only \$113,880.33, which is much less than the amount necessary to cover the compensation of the Commissioners, which is \$55,000 per annum. The Governor also stated that "Trying economic times necessitated consolidation of duplicative government instrumentalities." Based on my review and research, I believe that the Executive Order 2025-005 may be problematic for several reasons. The Governor cited NMI Constitution Article III, Section 15, as the authority to transfer the Cannabis Commission to the ABTC Division. The relevant part of Article III, Section 5 states that, "the Governor may make changes in the allocation of offices, agencies, and instrumentalities in their functions and duties that are necessary for efficient administration." While the Constitution grants the Governor discretion to be organized, Executive Branch, the Governor's authority cannot encroach into the Legislature's authority to establish laws and create agencies. Only the Legislature can do that. Now, the CNMI Supreme Court in the case *Torres v. CUC* addressed a similar Executive Order where the Governor then, transferred the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation to the Department of Public Works. The first Executive Order basically again, transferred CUC and the responsibility of CUC to the Department of Public Works and terminated the Board of Directors and created an Executive Director to run the office. The court reviewed the Executive Order and determined that the Governor exceeded his authority with the first Executive Order by abolishing the CUC Board, which altered CUC's administration and nullified existing statutes. So similarly, in this case, it appears that the EO also by transferring the Commonwealth Commission, which is an independent regulatory agency to a department, it's changing or altering, its administration. And also, by terminating the Commissioners again, that's also changing the administration because Public Law 20-66, the law that created the Cannabis Commission, intended that the regulation of cannabis be conducted by a Commission of five members representing Saipan, Tinian and Rota. By transferring, the Governor's Executive Order transfers and terminates existing board members and puts the regulation of cannabis under only one person, that's the Secretary of Finance. That's contrary to the intent of Public Law 20-66. And like I said, again, the transfer changes the administration because the Cannabis Commission was an independent regulatory agency, now it's part of a division under the Executive Branch. So again, that is contrary. That is different from the original intent of the law. And not only that, so the provisions relative to the Cannabis Commissioners becomes null on void, because now there are no Commissioners. The Commission is only going to be regulated by one person, that's the Secretary. Another problem with the EO is that it contradicts Public Law 20-66 and Article III, Section 21 of the Constitution, which states that the commissioners shall be removed for cause only. So, the existing Cannabis law states that the Commissioners can only be removed for cause. The Constitution also says that, "members of board or commission shall be independent and may be removed only on grounds of gross neglect, dereliction of duty, breach of fiduciary duty, conviction of a felony or mental or physical incapacity." These are the examples of cause, of when a Governor can remove a Commissioner and the Executive Order does not have any evidence or state any facts of any neglect, dereliction of duty, breach of fiduciary duty conducted by any of the Cannabis Commissioners. The only reason why the Governor is terminating the Commissioners is because the duties and

responsibilities of the Cannabis Commission has been transferred to ABTC. The transferring of the Cannabis Commission is not a cause or it doesn't meet the definition of dereliction of duty or breach of fiduciary duty or anything even close to the Commissioners doing anything wrong. Technically, they didn't do anything wrong. The Governor just said, oh, because we're transferring the commission, we don't need you anymore, you're terminated. Or you don't have any duties and responsibilities so we're terminating you. That's basically what the Governor did. Another reason why the Executive Order may be a problem is because Federal Grants administered by the Department of Commerce might be affected because cannabis is still a controlled substance under Federal Law. So, when the Legislature was considering whether or not to create this Cannabis Commission or regulate cannabis under any department, that issue was brought up. There was a concern at that time that if the Department of Commerce regulates cannabis, which is a Schedule 1, Controlled Substance under Federal law, the Federal Government might withhold grants or funding available to the Department of Commerce because they're regulating cannabis. So, it was decided it's better to separate the two. And if you look at the Federal Government, alcohol and tobacco, which is what ABTC regulates, is also governed by a separate agency. Under the Federal Government it's the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Agency that regulates alcohol and tobacco. And then a separate agency, the DEA, that's another agency that regulates cannabis...they're separate. That was also what the Legislature intended at that time and by transferring it to the department, again, that's contrary to what the Legislature intended. And then also the justification of the Executive Order is inaccurate or misleading. The Governor stated that the Cannabis Excise Tax collected for FY 2025 was only \$113,000. While this is correct, what the Governor didn't add is also the fund status of the Cannabis Revolving Fund. So, in addition to the excise tax for cannabis is a Cannabis Revolving Fund where all the license fees and other fees related to cannabis are deposited. And based on the Acting Commissioner's letter to the Senate President, which includes a certification of funds by the Secretary of Finance, as of July 31, there was approximately \$378,342.50. So that was not included in the Executive Order as justification, because obviously there is now more than enough money to cover the salaries of the Commissioners. So, in that sense, the Executive Order is kind of misleading or isn't accurate and doesn't have the complete financial picture of the Cannabis Commission and its Cannabis Revolving Fund. The Governor also states that, again, there's a need to consolidate "duplicative government instrumentalities." The Constitution authorizes the Governor to transfer agencies necessary for efficient administration. In this case I believe that it is not necessary for efficient administration because again, alcohol and tobacco are not controlled substances. So, you want to separate the controlled substance and the alcohol and tobacco in as far as how they're regulated and that again, was the intent of Public Law 20-66. And the Governor's Executive Order basically nullifies a lot of the provisions of the existing law, which is also contrary to what the court said the Governor can do in the Torres v. CUC case. So that's it in a nutshell. If you have any questions, I can answer them.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Counsel. Floor is open to the members. I would like to say thank you for articulating some of the information that we have just recently received. Understandably this came in, some of this information was received yesterday and on the 6th it's quite voluminous. There's also a letter to the Attorney General, Mr. Edward Manibusan, regarding some of the discrepancies that you articulated here today. I, on my behalf, I'm concerned. This seems to be a trend. I agree with wanting to make changes to these agencies and these commissions, however, again, for the same reasons why I voted against 2025-002, which was the Executive Order on the Casino Commission, I, again, share the same sentiment foundationally

with this Executive Order. In my opinion, by allowing this Executive Order to take effect it's causing more trouble than it's trying to fix. And if we would talk to each other like we've always said we would and have an open line of communication and dialogue, then I don't see how the three different houses, the House, the Senate and the Executive Branch can't come to terms on how they would want to reshape the Cannabis Commission moving forward. And that's, I guess the frustrating part that I have on my side is dealing with the fallout on the backend. It's easy to talk about the reasons why, but when the reasons aren't fully accounted for a lot of the following information is now brought into question and whether or not it's reliable, and that's not really where we're trying to go with this. I think everybody is trying to find solutions and trying to find a way to streamline processes. But if that's the case, then we should come to the Legislature where these statutes are born instead of executing Executive Orders. At the same time that we're dealing with a budget and the MPLT bill, so they I'm sure it wasn't lost on them that we would be dealing with multiple, monumental issues in concert with dealing with this Executive Order. That that's what I have for my part. Any other member? I recognize Senator Hofschneider.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Pres, first I apologize that usually the proceeding officer [...] But I do want to flag some of the concerns that we just recently received or not too long ago. Some discrepancies, so to speak. My only question upon hearing the Counsel's opinion is, so what now? What do we do as members of the Legislature flagging the potential violation of such, with lack of a better term, in terms of the revenue being generated, being collected by an entity that is quote unquote "not suitable just yet" to, or not equipped with the proper authority to administer the industry itself? Where does that leave us in terms of government? As what you mentioned, Mr. President, the proper format would be to change the law and instead of now basically removing this entity in itself and putting it under a subdivision of a department and that's recognized. But however, what about the conflicting categories or conflicting classifications, as far as the industry itself, being now leaving it to the state, in this case we legalize it. Versus a federal entity that has just, even administrative wise, hasn't even adjudicate or even gone to that. So, it begs the question to us members of the Legislature, are we going to turn the other way and just forget that it's there? Or what do we do? Do we pass another bill to recreate flawed action by this Executive Order? I think those are questions that we need to continue asking ourselves. I don't know what the fate of this EO, because I do know Mr. President, you made it very clear that you want us to entertain it. But, I guess the legislative process would be both houses to entertain it whether in favor or not. If, especially if you are not in favor of it, we need to entertain it on this platform. So that's my comment on this Mr. President and members. We're left without any clear delineation as to what's the authority basically of the CNMI government as a result of this particular movement by the Administration. Thank you, I yield back.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senator Hofschneider. Any other members? Recognize Senator Manglona. If I could just recognize the Vice President?

Senator Paul A. Manglona: I yield.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Okay. Can I go? Can I go? Am I recognized?

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Yes, Vice.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Okay. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our Legal Counsel Antonette for thoroughly explaining her analysis and the possibility of the EO being unconstitutional perhaps. But what I would to ask of the Legal Counsel is the question on whether or not the EO violates the Contracts Clause under the US Constitutions. Only because under Public Law 20-66, the Commissioners are considered Independent Contractors and not employees of the Government. Therefore, when the Governor appointed the Commissioners, they had to execute a contract between the Commissioners and the Office of the Governor. So, my question is specifically on the Contracts Clause, whether or not it was violated by the EO. Thank you.

Counsel Antonette R. Villagomez: The Cannabis Commission is a state agency and if there is an employment contract, I'm not sure how the Cannabis Commissioners are paid or how it's set up. If there was a contract and they were terminated without cause, it would not be a violation of the U.S. Constitution Contracts Clauses, it would be a violation of their own contract. And then they can take that contract to the courts and have the courts enforce it if they so wish. But I don't believe it's a violation of the U.S. Contracts Clause.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Okay. Thank you for the clarification, Counsel. That's all I have President, I yield.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Vice President Magofna. I recognize Senator Paul.

Senator Paul A. Manglona: Yes. Thank you, President and thank you Attorney. *Bai hu afaisen ha*, has your analysis or legal opinion been shared with the House of Representative's Legal Counsel and the members?

Counsel Antonette R. Villagomez: No, I only shared it with the Senate President and the Senate members.

Senator Paul A. Manglona: Oh okay. Because the signature date for the receipt of this letter is November 19th. So, we're so 60 days right, is the time for if we're going to correct or have an opportunity to address the concerns, the legal concerns that you're raising. So, let's say that the Legislature did not succeed in overriding this EO, so what are we faced with then? We would need to work on a Legislation, right?

Counsel Antonette R. Villagomez: Correct. If both Houses of the Legislature do not reject the Executive Order within the 60-day period, the transfer becomes effective. And, if the Legislature would like to change the structure and administration of the cannabis [...]

Senator Paul A. Manglona: So, we absolutely have to do that. Because you are concerned that there's some concerns there with marijuana still being classified as Class 1. Class 1, right? Or Schedule 1, rather.

Counsel Antonette R. Villagomez: I just stated that those concerns were raised when Public Law 20-66 was being considered. So, marijuana is still a Class 1 Controlled Substance today. So, I'm just saying that those concerns could still be relevant today, whether it would be an actual problem or not, I don't know. I think we would have to ask the Secretary of Commerce.

Senator Paul A. Manglona: Okay. So, I guess since the industry, as you mentioned, still contributes significantly especially after we amend the salary scheduled to address the financial challenges, right, that is an industry that we want to continue, right? [Counsel asked if question is directed to her.] Yeah. Yeah. So, I guess what I'm trying to point out is that we do need to work on a legislation with the House if the EO were to continue forward. I guess my question to you is legally this have to be addressed. *Noh? Pues tãya* Mr. President, I'm just saying that I understand we are on discussion and a motion has been placed on the floor already.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Not yet.

Senator Paul A. Manglona: Or not yet? Oh, okay. So, the idea is that if the Senate overrides this and the House, then it would address everything that, I guess Attorney is bringing up, but it will not address concerns by the Administration on the salary and on trying to streamline some of the concerns addressed in the EO. So, my recommendation is that we assign our two Legal Counsels to work with the House so that we can... if in case, that the House and Senate do not override this that we have to address that right away. Especially if the EO were to stand and were faced with those concerns. *Enao ha' para bai hu sangan.* Thank you, Mr. President.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senator Manglona. Any other members? I did want to circle back and respond, not to say that you're wrong, but the whole purpose of this exercise with these Executive Orders is to understand where the Constitution lies and where the Executive Branch has control to now begin to set statutes that are solely in the possession, that power is vested in the Legislature. And in the event that we're talking about okay, if this override doesn't meet both House and Senate and it fails, then it brings the Legislature to the table. Again, this is the flawed approach that I'm trying to bring awareness to the community. If we're serious about change and this is an issue that should be dealt from the ground up. We get communications and we have lists of how many things we get from the Governor 's office of all of these communications, and none of them really ask us to sit down and talk about tangible amendments that need to be made to different Commissions. Instead, we get told where to go and what taxes to pass, and then we still haven't gotten the money 18 months after we pass the tax. All I'm trying to advocate for is for the proper process to be taken into consideration when these Executive Orders are contemplated so that maybe we can have a dialogue with the Executive Branch and we can pre-empt this delay and instead of dealing with the problem, we can fix the problem so that it doesn't need to be in no man's land via this Executive Order. Now, we would have anticipated, we've had to have discussed and agree upon who would be the proper entity. How would we deal with the Commissioners that were duly appointed at the time that these laws were generated in the Legislature? That's where I again, stay consistent with my stance, that if we want change like the Governor always says, my door is always open; our door is always open. If we want to, if we want to have real discussions and dialogues about these issues and attack them and come up with a

solution before it becomes problematic, then let's do so, that's all I say. And with that I'll ask the Floor Leader. Or recognized [Senator Manglona].

Senator Paul A. Manglona: *Ti debabate yu' lao*, the reason why I'm mentioning that *sa eyi otro na* EO *nei put i* Casino Commission, right? Right now, there's communication from the Governor for the House and the Senate to amend the Casino Law and I'm getting worried, *nei sa* even after the EO, after months, right? The Legislature has not moved... If that's indeed the plan is to amend and work on the Governor's recommendation. I guess my point is only that we get the Senate and the House to put this as top agenda *nei*, so they can work on amending the EO that's in place for the Casino. And now it's looking more like this also will be in place, *sa ti nahong* time *i* House *esta noh*. So, that's all, I hear your point. What I'm saying is, why I asked that the Legal Counsel. I wish she had gotten this legal opinion or analysis earlier so that the House can have access to it and then maybe *guaha* time, ample time to do something about it. *Enao ha'*. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senator Manglona. Yeah, I don't want to draw it out any further and belabor the point. I think it's clear where we are and with that, we'll go ahead and I'll recognize the Floor Leader for the proper motion.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. I think in line with what the Counsel has brought forth and with the sentiments of the members at this time, I move to disapprove Executive Order No. 2025-005.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Do I hear a second?

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

This motion has been seconded.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: There has been a motion for the disapproval of Executive Order No. 2025-005, and has been seconded. Discussion. Everybody's ready? Clerk, please call the roll.

ROLL CALL

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	Absent – Excused
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent – Excused
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	...
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Corina L. Magofna	...
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Paul A. Manglona	Yes, with reservation

Senator Karl R. King-Nabors (President) Yes

Senator Corina L. Magofna: I'm sorry. I missed the... could you repeat the motion?

President Karl R. King-Nabors: The motion is to reject Executive Order No. 2025-005.

Senator Corina L. Magofna: Abstain.

Clerk: Mr. President?

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Yes. Short recess please.

The Senate recessed at 3:27 p.m.

RECESS

The Senate reconvened at 3:27 p.m.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: We now rise back and I'd like the Clerk to please call the roll.

ROLL CALL

CLERK called the roll with the following results:

Senator Celina R. Babauta	Absent – Excused
Senator Ronnie M. Calvo	Absent – Excused
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro	Yes
Senator Francisco Q. Cruz	Yes
Senator Jude U. Hofschneider	<i>Hunggan</i> (Yes)
Senator Corina L. Magofna	Abstain
Senator Donald M. Manglona	Yes
Senator Paul A. Manglona	Yes, with reservation.
Senator Karl R. King-Nabors (President)	Yes

Clerk: Mr. President, six voted “yes”, one abstention and two are absent.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: With six members voting to reject Executive Order No. 2025-005, the Senate has officially rejected said Executive Order. Moving on to letter E, Communications from the Judiciary, there are none.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE JUDICIARY:
NONE

Communications from Heads of Executive Departments, there are none.

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

Communications from the House. Recognized the Clerk.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE HOUSE:

Clerk: Mr. President, we have nine items, House Communication No. 24-109 to 118.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Discussions from the members? None? Okay. On to H, Communication from the Senate. Recognized Clerk.

Clerk: We have nine items, Senate Communication No. 24-179 to 187.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Discussion from members. Ready? Okay. Being that there are no items on the agenda Items I, J, K. Oh, my apologies. Under Item L, I recognize Senator Paul Manglona, for the Introduction of Bills, Initiatives, Local Bills and Resolutions.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS, INITIATIVES, LOCAL BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS:

Senator Paul A. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to formally introduce an unnumbered bill, Senate Legislative Initiative, "To amend Article XII, Section 3 of the Constitution [of the Northern Marianas Islands] to clarify that individuals may own permanent and long-term interests acquired above the first floor of a condominium building including common elements, easements, and access from the first floor." So introduced, thank you.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senator Manglona. Any other members? Okay. There being none, we will move on to... none under Reports of Special and Conference Committees.

**REPORTS OF SPECIAL AND CONFERENCE COMMITTEES:
NONE**

Nothing under the Bill Calendar.

**BILL CALENDAR:
NONE**

Under Q, Petitions, Memorials and Miscellaneous Communications. Recognized the Clerk.

PETITIONS, MEMORIALS AND MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS:

Clerk: We have five items, Miscellaneous Communication No. 24-69 to 72 and 24-74.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: This question for my part, I did want to say that I want to send my appreciation to the Acting Chairperson of the Cannabis Commission for her efforts to provide us, the Senate and the House, with a clear picture of all that is going under the purview of the Commission. Moving on to Announcements. Oh, I'm sorry. Under Miscellaneous Communications, recognized the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. This is in reference to Miscellaneous Communication No. 24-72. This is the CHCC's updated Financial Report for the HNP. And at this time, I would like to ask if the Chairman can just review or go over some of the expenses that have been identified by CHCC, maybe have a meeting with them looking at their expenses and how much we've expended in the different areas in which the HNP operates out of. As I've stated in prior meetings when I was the Health Chair, I visited some of these offices, and I've seen that there are several areas in which we can cut costs or save on expenses. One being an example, transportation in the Continental United States, we're spending \$174,000. And based on my walk through these offices, we can save a lot by investing in even just the vehicle in the U.S. we do have a staff that's out there assisting all patients, but she's operating out of her personal vehicle and we spend a lot on taxis. But maybe one thing that we can look at is transportation as well as Hawaii. We have a huge office space in Hawaii, but not a lot of our patients are being referred to Hawaii. We have four vehicles in Hawaii that aren't being used. Maybe ship some of that to the Continental U.S., but there are certain areas in which we can hopefully save and stretch out every dollar that we give HNP so that we can prolong the program. And hopefully with the Chair's support, we can call in CHCC. These issues have been addressed with them several times, but I haven't seen any changes. But I do know they are working on some of the recommendations that we've provided in terms of inner-island medical referral. So hopefully the next step is to revisit the referral outside the CNMI. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Floor Leader. Any other member? Recognized Senator Castro.

Senator Manny G.T. Castro: Thank you, President. I just wanted to add, to Senator Donald's requests regarding the Medical Referral. And I know that CHC members are employees from CHC, have been trying to work on an MOU with hospitals in Taiwan. But I'm not updated as to what other hospitals they're working with, but I just want to strongly encourage that they look into the hospitals or our State plan to include hospitals that are closer to us, such as Korea. Our government insurance is Aetna and if we can just look into making that process more smooth, because like Senator Donald mentioned, transportation costs are really expensive. And for those that have been to Korea or other places like Japan and even Hong Kong, mass transit is really simple. When I was in Korea a few years ago I didn't need to rent a taxi I just got on the rail and was able to get to where I needed to go. It's very convenient and at the same time, our cell phone providers, if you go to Korea, IT&E has a great agreement with providers there so, it's like sometimes people don't realize that you're in Korea. Or if you're in Japan, Docomo is already here.

Overall, I really hope they look deeper into the customer experience and try to make it as convenient as possible to our patients that are being referred off island. If they don't have to go to California, if it's cheaper to go to Korea, but not just those that are under Medicaid, but also to look at a lot of our patients that are paying self-pay. If somehow, we can help mitigate the cost of that expense by having more partnerships and agreements with healthcare providers abroad. Thank you, Senate President. I yield.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you. Senator Castro. Recognized Senator Manglona.

Senator Paul A. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. *Komo Chair gi Health Committee nei, siempre bai hu āgan sa alarming esti na kata gi January 6th nei, alarming. Sa komo para ta taitai esti lilelek-ña, gi otto 'mon i Ineru na mes nu,* without supplemental appropriation, there is a risk that the Health Network Program benefits may be reduced or discontinued. *Pues ha nu hu siente eyi. I CEO esti tumugi nei sa giya ha mapega esti Health Network Program. Magahet gi budget ta diskuti esti,* we actually discussed this somewhat because, we only appropriate \$1.2 million *nei ya* with the expectation down the fiscal year, we will be providing supplemental. *Pues ha,* if what the CEO is saying here *nei*, that they're getting a \$100,000 a month per *esti yota* appropriation *ya* they're spending \$374,000 *nei*. Then even if we do everything that, *para ta* address referral, obviously there's a big gap. And in the past years, that has been addressed by supplemental or I guess funding transfer by the Administration. Especially because prior to, the last couple years it was under the Governor's Office. So, we do really need both Houses to sit down and find out about supplemental opportunities. But that's not to say that we should not look at savings here and there. *Pues enao ha'.* Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: Thank you, Senator Manglona. In that vein, I do know that when the Delegate did come back when we first talked about the initial Quarter 1 assistance direct from OIA, Health Network Program was on top of the list... one of the main issues that they had to include funding for the Department of Corrections, the retirees and GHLI. So not to say that the onus is on the Federal Government to assist us with this, but we can look into the various possible avenues that we can look to help to supplement the Health Network Program, as it is something that we all need critically. Any other members? With that, onto the next item of the agenda Announcements. Members? I do have one. There will be a Session call for Tuesday, the 27th. So, I'm going to give some time, hopefully for the members to conduct the Committee meetings so that we can begin to move forward with the business of the Legislature now that we've moved past the bigger part of the budget. Okay. Anything else? None? With that, [recognized the] Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Donald M. Manglona: Thank you, Mr. President. At this time, I move to adjourn today's Session, subject to the call of the Chair.

Senator Jude U. Hofschneider: Second.

This motion has been seconded.

President Karl R. King-Nabors: There's been a motion to adjourn today's Senate Session, subject to the call of the Chair and has been seconded. All in favor say "aye".

Members present voiced "aye".

All opposed, say "nay". This session is here by adjourned at 3:39 p.m. Thank you all for your patience. Have a great day.

The Senate session adjourned at 11:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Aguon', written over a horizontal line.

Valerie S. Aguon
Senate Journal Clerk