

FIFTEENTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION, 2007

S. L. I. NO. 15-15

A SENATE LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE

To amend the Constitution of the Northern Mariana Islands to remove the constitutional protections of the salaries of elected officials and to reduce the operating budget of the Legislature.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE FIFTEENTH NORTHERN MARIANAS
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:**

1 **Section 1. Legislative Findings.**

2 The Legislature finds that the constitutional protection of the salaries of certain
3 elected officials is a serious impediment to efforts at cost containment within the CNMI
4 government. It is the duty of all elected officials to show their stewardship by taking the
5 initiative by sharing in financial constraints necessary to eliminate an operating deficit by
6 the government.

7 The Legislature further finds that the duty of true representation of the people
8 requires that they share the impact of budgetary constraints by reducing the costs of
9 operating the legislature.

10 Therefore, the Legislature finds that amending the Constitution to meet this goal
11 is necessary and proper.

12 **Section 2. Legislative Initiative.** The Constitution of the Northern Mariana
13 Islands is hereby amended as follows pursuant to sections 1, 3 and 5 of article XVIII of
14 the Constitution:

15 **(a) Amendments to Article II: Legislative Branch**

16 (1) Section 10 is amended to read:

17
18 **“Section 10: Compensation.** The members of the
19 legislature shall receive an annual salary ~~of eight thousand dollars~~
20 ~~and reasonable allowances for expenses~~ as provided by law,

1 ~~subject to referendum under section 2 of article IX. The salary of~~
2 ~~members may be changed no more than once every four years and~~
3 ~~only upon the recommendation of an advisory commission~~
4 ~~established by law to make recommendations concerning the~~
5 ~~compensation of Commonwealth executive, legislative and judicial~~
6 ~~officers. No change in the salary may be made that exceeds the~~
7 ~~percentage change in an accepted composite price index for the~~
8 ~~period since the last change.”~~
9

10 (2) Subsections (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) of section 16 are amended

11 to read:

12 “(a) Appropriations, or obligations and expenditures, for
13 the operations and activities of the legislature and legislative
14 bureau, ~~other than the salaries of members of the legislature, any~~
15 ~~payments required by law to be made as an employer contribution~~
16 ~~to any Commonwealth government retirement fund, and major~~
17 ~~equipment or capital improvement projects, may not exceed in any~~
18 fiscal year the budget ceiling provided in this section.
19

20 (b) Each member of each house shall receive an equal
21 amount within this ceiling not to exceed one hundred ~~fifty five~~
22 thousand dollars annually for office and related expenses including
23 all expenses for travel. Each member of each house shall file with
24 the public auditor and the Secretary of Finance a monthly report
25 with supporting documentation on the use of these funds.
26 Members may voluntarily pool all or any part of these funds.
27

28 (c) The presiding officer in each house shall receive within
29 this ceiling an additional amount not to exceed ~~four~~ two hundred
30 thousand dollars a year to support the operations and activities of
31 that house, to be expended according to the rules of that house. The
32 presiding officer shall file with the public auditor and the Secretary
33 of Finance a monthly report with supporting documentation on the
34 use of these funds. A portion of such amount shall be equally
35 distributed to the standing committees of that house for their
36 operations and activities.
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38 (d) The legislative bureau shall have a budget of not more
39 than ~~two~~ one million dollars, for the purposes specified in section
40 17. The Bureau may not purchase, rent, or lease vehicles for the
use of individual members of the legislature or their offices. The

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Bureau may not defray travel expenses of individual members of the legislature or their personal staff except as approved by joint resolution of the legislature. The term "major equipment or capital improvement projects" in subsection (a) does not include the purchase, rental, or lease of vehicles for the use of individual members of the legislature or their offices.

~~e) Beginning the second Monday of January 1998, the amount of the ceiling and all other dollar amounts stated in this section shall be adjusted every two years by the same percentage as the percentage change in the United States Department of Commerce composite price index during the two preceding fiscal years using the beginning of fiscal year 1996 as the base."~~

(b) **Amendment to Article III: Executive Branch.** Section 5 is amended to read:

"Section 5: Compensation. The compensation and a reasonable allowance for official expenses only of the governor shall receive an annual salary of twenty thousand dollars and the lieutenant governor an annual salary of eighteen thousand dollars shall be provided by law, subject to referendum under section 2 of Article IX. Both shall receive reasonable allowances for expenses provided by law. Upon the recommendation of the advisory commission on compensation provided for by article II, section 10, the Neither salary may be changed during a term of office."

(c) **Amendment to Article IV: Judicial Branch.** Section 6 is amended to read as follows:

"Section 6. Compensation. The compensation annual salary of a justice and a judge shall be provided by law, subject to referendum pursuant to section 2 of Article IX. The salary of a justice or judge may not be decreased during a term of office."

(d) **Amendment to Article V: Representation In The United States.** Section 5 is amended as follows:

"Section 5: Compensation. The resident representative shall receive an annual salary and reasonable allowance for official expenses only of the resident representative shall be provided by

1 law, subject to referendum pursuant to section 2 of Article IX. The
2 ~~salary may not be changed during a term of office.~~ The staff of the
3 office of the resident representative shall be exempted from the
4 civil service.”

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6 (e) **Amendment to Article IX: Initiative, Referendum and**
7 **Recall.** Subsections (b) and (c) of section 2 are amended as follows:

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9 “(b) A referendum petition shall be filed with the attorney
10 general, who shall have thirty days from the date the petition is
11 filed within which to certify for certification ~~for certification~~ that the requirements
12 of section 2(a) have been met.

13
14 (c) A referendum petition certified by the attorney general
15 shall be submitted to the voters at ~~the next general~~ a special
16 election that is held not later than sixty ~~at least thirty~~ days from the
17 date the petition has been certified.”

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19 **Section 3. Adoption and Transmittal.** The Speaker of the house and the
20 President of the Senate shall certify, and the Clerks of the House and the Senate shall
21 attest to the passage of this Legislative Initiative. The Senate Clerk shall then cause the
22 Legislative Initiative to be transmitted to the Governor and the Commonwealth Election
23 Commission. Pursuant to Article XVIII, Section 5 of the Commonwealth Constitution,
24 the Commission shall place the provisions of sections 1 and 2 of this initiative on a ballot
25 before the people of the Commonwealth for ratification in the next regular general
26 election.

Date: 04/25/07

Introduced By: /s/
Sen. Maria Frica T. Pangelinan