



**The Senate**  
NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE  
P.O. BOX 500129  
SAIPAN, MP 96950

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 24-19**

**Date: July 2, 2025**

**RE: House Bill No. 24-2**

*S. Adopted 7/14/25*

Honorable Dennis James C. Mendiola  
President of the Senate  
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas  
Commonwealth Legislature  
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. President:

Your Committee on Judiciary, Government, and Law, to which House Bill No. 24-2 was referred, entitled:

“To establish a process for the delivery of a State of the Commonwealth Address to the Legislature by the Governor,”

begs leave to report as follows:

**I. RECOMMENDATION:**

After considerable discussion and deliberation, your Committee recommends the passage of House Bill No. 24-2 in its current form.

**II. ANALYSIS:**

A. Purpose:

The purpose of House Bill No. 24-2 is to establish a process for the delivery of a State of the Commonwealth Address by the Governor to the Legislative Branch.

B. Committee Findings:

Your Committee finds that the Governor is mandated to report at least annually to the Legislature pursuant to Article III, Section 9(b) of the NMI Constitution, regarding the affairs of the Commonwealth and new measures as necessary, commonly known as the State of the Commonwealth Address (SOCA). The SOCA may be delivered in writing, recorded, or personally reported in joint session before the legislature and shall include a comprehensive annual financial report. However, there is no current constitutional or statutory mandate as to when the SOCA shall be delivered, which has often been overlooked in the past.

Your Committee met on July 2, 2025, to formally discuss the proposed legislation. Your Committee recognizes that although constitutionally mandated, the existing absence of a formal process for the delivery of the SOCA, including an established timeline, has been addressed under House Bill No. 24-2. Your Committee agrees with the intent of the proposed legislation to ensure necessary streamlining and timely planning by both the executive branch and the legislative branch.

It is for these reasons that your Committee supports the intent of the proposed legislation and recommends the passage of House Bill No. 24-2 in its current form.

C. Legislative History:

House Bill No. 24-2 was formally introduced by Representative Ralph N. Yumul on February 14, 2025, to the full body of the House of Representatives and was referred to the House Standing Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations (JGO) for disposition. On April 29, 2025, the House JGO Committee adopted House Bill No. 24-2 in its current form, which was reported to the full body of the House of Representatives under House Standing Committee Report (SCR) No. 24-1. On May 15, 2025, during the First Day, Second Special Session of the House of Representatives, House SCR 24-1 was adopted, and the House of Representatives passed House Bill No. 24-2 in its current form. House Bill No. 24-2 was transmitted to the Senate on May 19, 2025, and was subsequently referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Judiciary, Government, and Law for disposition.

During the Twenty-Third Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature, a similar legislation, House Bill No. 23-4 was formally introduced by Representative Ralph N. Yumul on February 3, 2023 during the Second Day, First Regular Session of the House of Representatives and was passed on First and Final Reading in its current form. House Bill No. 23-4 was transmitted to the Senate on February 6, 2023 and was subsequently referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Judiciary, Government, and Law for disposition. On January 3, 2025, the Senate convened its 8<sup>th</sup> Day, Fourth Regular Session, and a motion was made and seconded to file all remaining bills, resolutions, reports, and other assignments given to committees that require Senate action. Accordingly, House Bill No. 23-4 was filed, and the Senate of the Twenty-Third Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature adjourned *sine die*.

D. Public Hearing and Comment:

1. Public Hearing. No public hearing was scheduled for House Bill No. 24-2. However, a committee meeting, which is open to the public, was held on July 2, 2025. See below for further details.
2. Committee Meeting. The proposed legislation made its first appearance during the scheduled committee meeting on Wednesday, July 2, 2025. The committee meeting notice and agenda was posted on June 26, 2025 on various legislative forums and social media sites to invite members of the general public to provide comments as indicated under *Item No. IV. Public Comment* on the Committee Agenda. However, no oral testimonies in support or in opposition of the proposed legislation were presented before the Committee.
3. Written Comment. Your Committee sent out several requests for comments on the proposed legislation. To date, the status of comments received from the following government and private entities is as follows:
  - a. Office of the Attorney General, *no comment received*

E. Estimated Fiscal Cost:

The enactment of House Bill No. 24-2 will not result in additional costs to the Commonwealth government, as the proposed legislation intends to formally establish a process for the delivery of the State of the Commonwealth Address by the Governor to the Legislative Branch. Any potential costs associated to the in-person delivery of the SOCA before the legislature in joint session will depend on the agreements made between the executive and legislative branches at the time of reporting.


F. Summary of Committee Amendments:


Your Committee made no amendments to the proposed legislation.


**III. CONCLUSION:**


Your Committee agrees with the intent and purpose of the proposed legislation and recommends the passage of House Bill No. 24-2 in its current form.

Respectfully submitted,

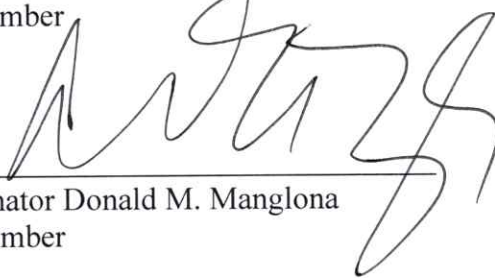
  
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Senator Karl R. King-Nabors  
Chairperson

  
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Senator Francisco Q. Cruz  
Vice Chairperson

  
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Senator Ronnie M. Calvo  
Member

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Senator Manny Gregory T. Castro  
Member

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Senator Corina L. Magofna  
Member

  
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Senator Donald M. Manglona  
Member

Reviewed by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Senate Legal Counsel

**TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH**

**LEGISLATURE**

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**FEBRUARY 14, 2025**

**First Regular Session, 2025**

**H. B. 24-2**

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**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

To establish a process for the delivery of a State of the Commonwealth Address to the Legislature by the Governor.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE 24<sup>TH</sup> NORTHERN MARIANAS  
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:**

1       **Section 1. Findings and Purpose.** Article II, Section 9 (b) of the Constitution  
2 of the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands provides: “The Governor shall  
3 report at least annually to the legislature regarding affairs of the Commonwealth  
4 and new measures that are necessary or desirable. The report shall include a  
5 comprehensive annual financial report prepared in accordance with generally  
6 accepted accounting principles.” Similarly, Article II, Section 3 of the United States  
7 federal Constitution, provides that the President “shall from time to time give to the  
8 Congress information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their  
9 Consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.”

10       Adopting the federal phrase “State of the Union” but changing “Union” to  
11 “Commonwealth,” our government describes the annual report of the Governor as  
12 a “State of the Commonwealth Address” or SOCA that is delivered expressly to the

1 Legislature. Traditionally, the governor may deliver a SOCA in writing or as a  
2 recorded or live speech. A mere written SOCA could be delivered by hand or  
3 electronic means for the Legislature to read at the convenience of the members. But  
4 a live SOCA raises unique concerns that require planning and joint decision-  
5 making. Presently, other than establishing an annual requirement, the CNMI  
6 Constitution leaves undecided the details of how, when and where the annual  
7 SOCA shall be delivered to the Legislature.

8       Ideally, a live SOCA would need to be delivered in the physical presence of  
9 the Legislature in order to be effective—although the SOCA also could be  
10 simultaneously broadcast on TV or radio or streamed on the internet for the benefit  
11 of the public. Historically, the delivery of the SOCA as a live speech in the presence  
12 of the Legislature has been preceded by a formal invitation by the Legislature to  
13 the Governor through a joint resolution of the House and Senate. The invitation for  
14 a live SOCA has traditionally identified mutually acceptable meeting time and  
15 place that was convenient for all branches of government.

16       As a practical and logistical matter, the timing of the delivery of a live SOCA  
17 requires careful consideration of several factors, including availability of all  
18 branches of government, convenience of access and related political concerns such  
19 as an impending election. The location of a live SOCA also must be able to  
20 accommodate all members of the Legislature and any members of the Executive  
21 and Judicial branches that may wish to attend, along with an opportunity for the

1 public to attend or at least hear the SOCA. Given these competing interests and the  
2 absence of a formalized process to schedule a SOCA, particularly a live SOCA, the  
3 Legislature finds that clear legislation is needed to set out some of the basic steps  
4 in scheduling the annual delivery of a SOCA to the Legislature. In order to address  
5 this need to establish a straightforward process for scheduling a SOCA in place of  
6 traditional methods that can be inconsistently applied, this legislation creates a  
7 statutory, yet flexible, process for scheduling the annual delivery of a SOCA,  
8 particularly when the SOCA is delivered live.

9       **Section 2. Amendment.** Title 1 (Government), section 2053, of the  
10 Commonwealth Code is amended to read as follows:

11               **“§ 2053. Office of the Governor: Duties.**

12               **(a)** The Governor has the powers and duties as provided in the  
13 Commonwealth Constitution or as provided by law. In addition, the Governor  
14 shall receive official visitors and conduct official ceremonies of the  
15 Commonwealth. These duties and responsibilities may be delegated to the  
16 Lieutenant Governor or to elected or appointed officials of the  
17 Commonwealth.

18               **(b)** Consistent with Article II, section 9, of the CNMI Constitution, the  
19 Governor shall deliver an annual State of the Commonwealth Address  
20 (SOCA) to the Legislature. The Governor shall deliver the SOCA not later  
21 than March of any calendar year, and may present the SOCA live, recorded

1 or in writing. A written or recorded SOCA shall be transmitted by the  
2 Governor to the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House for delivery  
3 to the members. Prior to any live SOCA, the Governor shall give written  
4 notice of a proposed date and time to both the President of the Senate and the  
5 Speaker of the House no later than 45 days prior to the proposed date in order  
6 for the Legislature to consider a joint resolution setting out the time and place  
7 for the SOCA. If such a joint resolution fails to pass in both houses of the  
8 Legislature, the Governor shall submit only a written or recorded SOCA.”

9 **Section 3. Severability.** If any provisions of this Act or the application of  
10 any such provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court  
11 of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its  
12 provisions to persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid  
13 shall not be affected thereby.

14 **Section 4. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein shall  
15 not be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired  
16 under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the  
17 statutes. Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted  
18 under or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect  
19 of terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall  
20 already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

HOUSE BILL 24-2

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- 1        **Section 5. Effective Date.** This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the  
2 Governor, or it becoming law without such approval.

Prefiled: 2/4/2025

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Introduced by: /s/ Rep. Ralph N. Yumul  
/s/ Rep. Joel C. Camacho  
/s/ Rep. Marissa R. Flores

Reviewed for legal sufficiency by:

/s/ Joseph L.G. Taijeron, Jr.  
House Legal Counsel

Date: 2/4/2025