HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

Vice Speaker Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building
Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950
cnmileg.net

HOUSE FILE

November 7, 2025

The Honorable Karl R. King-Nabors
President
The Senate
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas
Commonwealth Legislature
Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Senate President King-Nabors:

I have the honor of transmitting herewith for Senate *action* **H. B. No. 24-43, HD1**, entitled, "**To create a new criminal offense for Desecration, Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, Historical or Cultural Sites, and Property.**," which was passed by the House of Representatives on First and Final Reading by the majority vote of the members present, a quorum being present, during its Seventh Day, Second Regular Session, on November 6, 2025.

Sincerely yours,

Linda B. Muña, MPA
House Clerk

Attachment

TRANSMITTAL TO THE SENATE

Received by: _____ **Date:** 11/07/25 **Time:** 1:29pm

TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 31, 2025

Fifth Special Session, 2025 **H. B. 24-43, HD1**

A BILL FOR AN ACT

To create a new criminal offense for Desecration, Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, Historical or Cultural Sites, and Property.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE 24TH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:

Section 1. Findings and Purpose. Sites of remembrance, reconciliation, and cultural identity—such as public memorials, historic landmarks, ~~and~~ commemorative structures, and cultural structures—hold deep meaning for the people of the Commonwealth and for visitors who share in our history. These places are not only local heritage sites; they are enduring symbols of peace, sacrifice, resilience, perseverance, and international goodwill. The recent theft and vandalism of the Korean Peace Memorial bust of Mr. Yong Taek Lee—a revered representation of friendship between the CNMI and the Republic of Korea—and other similar acts at historical or tourist sites are not merely property crimes. They are acts of desecration that diminish the Marianas' standing as a safe and respectful place—one that honors the sacrifices made here and the relationships those sites were built to represent.

In its current form, the CNMI's general vandalism statute—6 CMC § 1805—fails to capture the distinct and compounded harm caused when memorials or culturally significant sites are defiled. While the statute criminalizes property damage, it draws no distinction between routine vandalism—such as graffiti or minor destruction, and acts of disrespect and malice—and the desecration of structures that carry ceremonial, symbolic, or local and international importance. This lack of legal recognition leaves prosecutors and courts without the tools to reflect the full gravity of such acts. As a result, the Commonwealth's ability to deter these offenses and respond meaningfully remains limited.

The lack of a specific legal remedy—one that goes beyond merely prosecuting property damage—weakens deterrence and leaves culturally and historically significant sites vulnerable to repeat offenses. When such acts go unpunished or are treated as routine vandalism, the message conveyed is one of indifference. Without a legal distinction that captures the true nature of these violations, we cannot fully confront or correct the harm they cause.

Enactment of this "full force" legislation empowers the Commonwealth to respond decisively to acts that target the sites most sacred to our shared identity. By establishing a distinct criminal offense, imposing enhanced penalties, and requiring full restitution, this Act ensures that such violations are no longer treated as minor offenses. The Legislature affirms that cultural, memorials, and historical sites deserve not only preservation, but protection rooted in principle—protection

that addresses not just the physical damage, but the broader harm these offenses inflict on the image of our islands and our people. These crimes of desecration shall be met with the full force of the law.

Section. 2. Enactment. Title 6, Division 1, Crimes Against Person and Property, Part 2. Crimes Against Property, Chapter 3. Other Property Offenses of the Commonwealth Code is hereby amended by adding the following new section 1806, titled, "Desecration, Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, Historical or Cultural Sites, and Property" that provides as follows:

"§ 1806. Desecration, Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, Historical or Cultural Sites, and Property.

Definitions.

Property: Monuments, statues, busts, plaques, structures, ancestral latte stones, lusongs (ancestral mortar stone), signages, or other ancestral objects, materials and artifacts that are significant to a historical and cultural identities and sites.

(a) Offense. A person commits the offense of Desecration, ~~or~~ Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, Historical or Cultural Sites, and property if they knowingly or intentionally:

(1) Damage, deface, destroy, or desecrate any monument, statue, bust, plaque, structure, ancestral latte stone, lusong (ancestral mortar stone), or signage located at or designated as

a memorial, cultural or historical site;

(2) Steal, remove, or unlawfully possess any component of a memorial, cultural or historical site, including ancestral latte stone, lusong (ancestral mortar stone), statues, sacred items, markers, or artifacts;

(3) Tamper with, paint, spray, urinate on, or defile any portion of such site or property;

(4) Attempt to sell any ancestral latte stone, lusong (ancestral mortar stone), regardless of locality of finding (public or private land);

(5) Unlawful possession ancestral artifacts and other materials that hold cultural significance;

(6) Attempt to sell any monument, statue, bust, plaque, structure, or signage stolen from a site designated as a memorial, cultural or historical. This includes ancestral objects, artifacts and other materials that hold cultural and historical significance;

(7) Aid, abet, or conspire in the commission of any such act.

(b) Designated Protected Sites. This section shall apply to:

(1) Sites registered by the CNMI Historic Preservation Office;

(2) Sites designated by local or municipal governments as war memorials or cultural heritage locations;

(3) Sites established or recognized in partnership with foreign governments or international peace organizations.

(c) Penalty. Any person convicted under this section shall be guilty of a felony and shall be sentenced to:

(1) Imprisonment for not less than five (5) years and up to fifteen (15) years;

(2) A fine of not less than $25,000 and not more than $100,000;

(3) Mandatory full restitution, including the cost of repair, replacement, or recovery of stolen or damaged property;

(4) A written and public apology to the community and any affected international partner or donor;

(5) Four hundred (400) hours of community service, preferably focused on cultural preservation, site restoration, or public education.

(d) Aggravating Circumstances. The court shall impose the maximum sentence under this section if:

(1) The offense involves international memorials or symbols of reconciliation;

(2) The act causes permanent or irreparable damage;

(3) The offense was committed with hate, malice, or commercial intent;

(4) The offender has a prior conviction under this section.

(e) Juvenile Offenders. For offenders under the age of eighteen (18):

(1) The minor shall be subject to court-ordered rehabilitative cultural education, in addition to restitution and community service;

(2) Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) shall be jointly liable for restitution.

Section 3. Enactment. Subject to codification by the CNMI Law Revision Commission, the following provision shall be enacted into law:

"101. Public Education and Protection.

The Historic Preservation Office, in coordination with the Department of Public Safety and the Marianas Visitors Authority, shall:

(a) Post signage at all memorial and historical sites clearly stating penalties for Title 6 section 1806;

(b) Implement a public awareness campaign to educate residents and tourists about the importance of respecting CNMI heritage;"

Section 4. Severability. If any provisions of this Act or the application of any such provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.

Section 5. Savings Clause. This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the statutes. Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

Section 6. Effective Date. This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the Governor, or it becoming law without such approval.

Prefiled: 7/29/2025

Date: _____ Introduced by: /s/ Rep. Julie M. A. Ogo
/s/ Rep. Vincent R. Aldan
/s/ Rep. Roman C. Benavente
/s/ Rep. Angelo A. Camacho
/s/ Rep. Joseph A. Flores
/s/ Rep. Marissa R. Flores
/s/ Rep. Ralph N. Yumul

Reviewed for legal sufficiency by:

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

Date: 7/29/2025

House Draft 1, reviewed for legal sufficiency by:

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

Date: 10/20/2025

TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS
P.O. BOX 500586 SAIPAN, MP 96950

JOEL C. CAMACHO
CHAIRMAN

Adopted - 11/6/2025
STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 24-38
DATE: October 17, 2025
RE: House Bill No. 24-43

The Honorable Edmund S. Villagomez
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas
Commonwealth Legislature
Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations to which was referred:

House Bill No. 24-43: To create a new criminal offense for Desecration or Theft of Memorials and Historical Sites.

begs leave to report as follows:

I. RECOMMENDATION:

After considerable discussion and deliberation, your Committee recommends that House Bill No. 24-43 be passed by the House in the form of House Draft 1 (HD1).

RECEIVED BY
10/21/2025 TIME 1:00p
DATE

II. ANALYSIS:

A. Purpose:

The purpose of House Bill No. 24-43 is to establish a specific criminal offense with enhanced penalties for the desecration or theft of memorials and historical sites, recognizing their cultural

and symbolic significance and ensuring these acts are treated with the gravity they deserve.

B. Committee Findings:

Your Committee finds that memorials, landmarks, and cultural sites are vital symbols of peace, sacrifice, and resilience, deeply significant for both the community and visitors. Acts of theft and vandalism at these sites are more than mere property crimes; they are acts of desecration that harm the Commonwealth's dignity and reputation. Recognizing that the current law, Title 6, Crimes and Criminal Procedure, Division 1, Crimes Against Person and Property, Part 2, Crimes Against Property, Chapter 3, Other Property Offenses, Section 1805, Vandalism, fails to specifically address the unique harm caused by damaging culturally or historically significant sites, thereby limiting effective prosecution and deterrence, this legislation aims to fill that gap. By establishing a specific offense with stricter consequences, the Act, reaffirms the commitment to protect and respect these sacred symbols of our shared heritage.

On October 17, 2025, your Committee convened to refine the provisions and ensure clear protections for these culturally and historically significant sites. During this meeting, Members discussed the necessary clarifications and amendments to strengthen the bill. As a result, the amended version, House Bill 24-43, HD1, was developed to address issues such as desecration, theft, or attempted sale of stolen memorials, historical or cultural sites, and property within the Commonwealth. The bill now defines key terms such as "Property" and "Ancestral Objects" to clearly identify protected items and sites, and outlines specific actions that constitute the offense, including damaging monuments, stealing components, tampering with sites, and unlawfully possessing culturally significant artifacts.

Your Committee also finds that the amended bill designates protected sites, including those registered by the CNMI Historic Preservation Office, sites designated by local governments, and locations recognized through international partnerships. It stipulates penalties for violations, which include imprisonment, fines, restitution, a public apology, and community service, with provisions for aggravating circumstances and juvenile offenders. To further promote respect for CNMI heritage, the Department of Public Safety and the Marianas Visitors Authority are tasked with posting signage and implementing a public awareness campaign. This comprehensive approach strengthens protections for these culturally and historically significant sites and reflects our shared commitment to safeguarding our heritage.

C. Committee Amendments:

Your Committee made the following amendments to the strengthen the intent of this Act.

1. Page 1, Title: The following under "A BILL FOR AN ACT" is amended to read as follows:

> "To create a new criminal offense for Desecration, Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, Historical or Cultural Sites, and Property."

2. Page 1, Line 3: After the word "structures", insert the following:

   ", and cultural structures"

3. Page 1, Line 6: The beginning line before the word "and", insert the following:

   "resilience, perseverance,"

4. Page 2, Line 5: After the word "destruction", insert the following:

   ", and acts of disrespect and malice"

5. Page 2, Line 6: After the word "or", insert the following:

   "local and"

6. Page 3, Lines 4-20: The following page is amended to read as follows:

   "Section. 2. Enactment. Title 6, Division 1, Crimes Against Person and Property, Part 2. Crimes Against Property, Chapter 3. Other Property Offenses of the Commonwealth Code is hereby amended by adding the following new section 1806, titled, "Desecration, ~~or~~ Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, ~~and~~ Historical or Cultural Sites, and Property" that provides as follows:

   "§ 1806. Desecration, ~~or~~ Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, ~~and~~ Historical or Cultural Sites, and Property.

   Definitions.

   Property: Monuments, statues, busts, plaques, structures, ancestral latte stones (two-part pillar), lusongs (ancestral mortar stone), signages, or other ancestral objects, materials and artifacts that are significant to a historical and cultural identities and sites.

   ~~Ancestral Objects: Belonging to a community existing in 1925 or older.~~

   (a) Offense. A person commits the offense of Desecration, ~~or~~ Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, ~~and~~ Historical or Cultural Sites, and property if they knowingly or intentionally:"

7. Page 4, Lines 1-19: The following page is amended to read as follows:

   "statue, bust, plaque, structure, ancestral latte stone (two-part pillar), lusong (ancestral mortar stone), or signage located at or designated as a memorial,

cultural or historical site;

(2) Steal, remove, or unlawfully possess any component of a memorial, cultural or historical site, including ancestral latte stone (two-part pillar), lusong (ancestral mortar stone), statues, sacred items, markers, or artifacts;

(3) Tamper with, paint, spray, urinate on, or defile any portion of such site or property;

(4) Attempt to sell any ancestral latte stone (two-part pillar), lusong (ancestral mortar stone), regardless of locality of finding (public or private land);

(5) Unlawful possession ancestral artifacts and other materials that hold cultural significance;

(6) Attempt to sell any monument, statue, bust, plaque, structure, or signage stolen from a site designated as a memorial, cultural or historical. This includes ancestral objects, artifacts and other materials that hold cultural and historical"

8. Page 7, Lines 5-6. The beginning of Line 5 to the end of line 6, are deleted in its entirety, as follows:

"~~(c) Develop a reporting hotline for suspected vandalism, discretion, or suspicious activity at protected sites.~~"

C. Public Comments:

The Committee received written comments from the following:

1. Michael Cruz, Director of Division of Parks and Recreation, received on October 17, 2025
2. Honorable Ramon "RB" Jose Blas Camacho, Mayor, Municipality of Saipan, received on October 17, 2025
3. Jamika R. Taijeron, Managing Director, Marianas Visitors Authority, received on October 17, 2025

4. Honorable Aubry M. Hocog, Mayor, Municipality of Rota, received on October 17, 2025
5. Leonard Leon, Executive Director, NMI Museum of History & Culture, October 17, 2025
6. Sylvan O. Igisomar, Secretary, CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources, received on October 17, 2025

Written comments received have been attached as part of this committee report.

D. Legislative History:

On July 31, 2025, Representative Julie Marie A. Ogo introduced House Bill No. 24-43. On that same date, House Bill No. 24-43 was subsequently referred to the House Standing Committee on Judicial and Governmental Operations for disposition.

E. Cost Benefit:

The enactment of House Bill No. 24-43, HD1, will likely result in minimal to no additional cost to the CNMI government, as it primarily enhances existing legal frameworks by creating a new criminal offense focused on the protection of memorials, historical sites, and cultural properties, utilizing current law enforcement and judicial resources. While the bill tasks the Department of Public Safety and the Marianas Visitors Authority with posting signage and implementing public awareness campaigns, these activities can likely be integrated into existing programs and budgets. The specified penalties, such as imprisonment, fines, restitution, public apologies, and community service, are standard within the current legal system. Moreover, the absence of provisions requiring new facilities, equipment, or additional personnel indicates that the legislation will rely on existing resources and structures, thereby minimizing any significant financial impact on the CNMI government.

III. CONCLUSION:

Your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of House Bill No. 24-43 and recommends its passage in the form of HD1.

Respectfully submitted,

Rep. Joel C. Camacho
Chairman

Rep. Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao
Vice Chairman

Rep. Vincent S. Aldan, Member

Rep. Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Member

Rep. Angelo A. Camacho, Member

Rep. Diego V.F. Camacho, Member

Rep. Marissa R. Flores, Member

Rep. Joseph A. Flores, Member

Rep. Julie A. Ogo, Member

Rep. John Paul P. Sablan, Member

Rep. Ralph N. Yumul, Member

Reviewed by:

House Legal Counsel

Date: 10.20.25

Attachments:

- House Bill No. 24-43, House Draft 1 (HD1), dated for legal sufficiency on October 17, 2025
- Letter from Michael Cruz, Director of the Division of Parks and Recreation, CNMI DLNR, dated August 22, 2025
- Letter from Honorable Ramon "RB" Jose Blas Camacho, Mayor of the Municipality of Saipan, dated August 27, 2025
- Letter from Jamika R. Taijeron, Managing Director of the Marianas Visitors Authority, dated September 2, 2025
- Letter from Honorable Aubry M. Hocog, Mayor of the Municipality of Rota, dated September 2, 2025
- Letter from Leonard Leon, Executive Director of the NMI Museum of History & Culture, dated September 2, 2025
- Letter from Sylvan O. Igisomar, Secretary of the CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources, dated September 3, 2025

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION
DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES
TEL:(670)-234-7405

August 22, 2025

To: Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo
Address: 24th Legislature PO BOX 500586, Saipan MP 96950

Subject: Support Letter

Dear Representative Julie Ogo,

Hafa Adai yan Tirow,

I am in support of HB 24-043 "To create a new criminal offense for desecration or theft of memorial and historical sites." As a person in charge of maintaining tourists' sites through PL 14-27, it really is a challenge to repair or replace damage from vandalism.

Damaging historical and memorial sites leads to the irreversible loss of cultural heritage, scientific data, and natural resources, which can harm future generations and local communities by destroying unique historical context, undermining cultural identity, and causing economic and social displacement.

Physical damage like vandalism and theft accelerate deterioration and can cause an increase in costs for maintenance and preservation.

Irreversible Damage to Artifacts:
Moving artifacts removes them from their archaeological context, destroying vital information about their original use and function.

Destruction of Cultural Identity:
Deliberate targeting or damage to cultural sites can be an attack on the identity and history of the communities connected to them, a phenomenon known as "cultural cleansing."

Loss of Knowledge:

Rep. Joel Camacho
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COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION
DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES
TEL:(670)-234-7405

Both physical damage and moving artifacts contribute to the loss of historical and scientific knowledge for current and future generations.

Vandalism:
One of the costliest to the Department/Division is to get funding to replace or repair graffiti, digging for artifacts, and the removal of items from their original setting defaces and degrades historical and memorial sites.

Lost Tourism Revenue:
Damage and degradation of sites can reduce the overall satisfaction for tourists and, in the long term, decreases the destinations' appeal, impacting the economy.

Reduced Visitors Experience:
Vandalism, litter, and theft contribute to a degraded experience for tourists, diminishing their satisfaction with their destination.

Sincerely,

Michael Cruz
Director of Division of Parks and Recreation

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
MUNICIPALITY OF SAIPAN
CTC Building, 2799 Teer Drive Suite A, Oleai
P.O. Box 501457 Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 234-6208 • Fax: (670) 234-1190 • Email: saipanmayor@mos.gov.mp

Ramon "RB" Jose Blas Camacho
Mayor of Saipan

August 27, 2025

Julie A. Ogo
Chairwoman
House Standing Committee on Tourism
24th Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
P.O. Box 500586
Saipan, MP 96950

Subject: H.B. 24-043: "To create a new criminal offense for Desecration or Theft of Memorials and Historical Sites."

Hafa Adai and Tirow Chairwoman Ogo,

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to comment on the above House Bill. I write in full support of House Bill 24-043, *"To create a new criminal offense for Desecration or Theft of Memorials and Historical Sites."*

Memorials and historical sites across the Commonwealth hold deep sentimental value to our people, embodying our rich history, honoring those who came before us, and serving as vital spaces for reflection, education, and unity. These sites are not only symbols of cultural identity but are also integral to our tourism industry, welcoming visitors who seek to learn about and experience our unique heritage.

The creation of a criminal offense for the desecration or theft of such sites ensures accountability, safeguards these irreplaceable landmarks, and underscores the seriousness of their preservation. This measure promotes not only protection, but also the continued upkeep, safety, and respectful use of memorials and historical sites.

Additionally, I respectfully suggest that as part of the implementation of this bill, consideration be given to installing signage at memorials and historical sites that display rules, protections, and historical information in the different languages represented within our community. The CNMI is a diverse community with many cultures and languages, and by making signage multilingual, we can ensure that all residents and visitors alike understand the importance of protecting these sacred and historical spaces.

Rep. Joel Camacho
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As Mayor of Saipan, I have witnessed the important role these sites play in strengthening community pride and the development economic opportunities through tourism. By passing this legislation, we affirm our collective responsibility to preserve them for future generations.

Sincerely,

RAMON "RB" JOSE BLAS CAMACHO
Mayor, Municipality of Saipan

MARIANAS
VISITORS AUTHORITY
P.O. BOX 500861 CK
SAIPAN, MP 96950
TEL: (670) 664-3200/1
FAX: (670) 664-3237
E-mail: info@mymarianas.com
www.mymarianas.com

The Marianas

September 2, 2025

Chairwoman Julie Marie Ogo
Tourism Committee
House of Representatives
24th NMC Legislature
P.O. Box 500129
Saipan, MP 96950

RE: HB 24-43

Hafa adai and Tirow, Chairwoman Ogo:

On behalf of the Marianas Visitors Authority (MVA), thank you for the opportunity to comment and endorse the passage of H.B. 24-43, "to create a new criminal offense for Desecration or Theft of Memorials and Historical Sites."

We thank the authors of the bill for recognizing the need for further protection of memorial and historical sites in The Marianas. In general, visitors choose destinations where they feel safe and avoid destinations that are dangerous. Due to the high traffic and high visibility of memorials and historical sites to visitors, in particular, these areas especially need to be kept secure. The Marianas has long enjoyed a reputation as a safer destination, and it is a perception that we cannot afford to lose, as it would be very difficult and take a long time to reverse, if even possible.

Many of our local sites are listed as U.S. Historic Landmarks or on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places, underscoring their unique and invaluable importance for both the local community, our nation, and the world. Furthermore, The Marianas is a multi-cultural community with a diverse history that includes many different peoples, and this rich history is an important part of our tourism industry. The protection of these sites is in line with our community values of *resputu, awóówóó*, and respect, as we convey to visitors our heritage as a destination where all people are welcomed and respected.

It is shocking that some of these sites have been the target of theft and vandalism, most recently the Korean Peace Memorial and Suicide Cliff memorial in Marpi, Saipan. This is not only an offense to individual citizens, but it is a direct blow to the MVA's efforts to reaffirm partnership with our top source market of Korea and restore ties of government, business, and community with our once-dominant source market of Japan through our Marianas Revival Project. It is our hope that the enactment of HB 24-43 will serve as a deterrent against such crimes in the future.

For these reasons, we endorse the passage of HB 24-43. Furthermore, the MVA would also generally support an increase in fines and penalties for all crimes committed against *visitors or their property anyplace in the commonwealth* toward further protecting our guests and our vital tourism industry.

KATA PATA JATA Japan Association of Travel Agents

Rep. Joel Camacho
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Should you have any questions or require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 1.670.664.3200 or email at jtaijeron@mymarianas.com.

Sincerely,

Jamika R. Taijeron
Managing Director

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
THE HONORABLE AUBRY MANGLONA HOCOG
Mayor of the Municipality of Rota
Mailing Address: Post Office Box 537 Rota, MP 96951

MOR-2025-302

September 2, 2025

Honorable Julie A. Ogo
Chairwoman
House Standing Committee on Tourism
House of Representatives
24th Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
P.O. Box 500586
Saipan, MP 96950

Subject: Endorsement of H.B. 24-043: "To create a new criminal offense for Desecration or Theft of Memorials and Historical Sites."

Dear Chairwoman Ogo,

I am writing in response to your correspondence of August 18, 2025, regarding House Bill 24043. I have reviewed the bill's provisions and intent in their entirety, and I wish to express my full and unwavering support for this critical piece of legislation.

The findings presented in the bill, particularly those concerning the recent acts of vandalism and desecration at cultural and historical sites, are deeply concerning and accurately reflect the challenges our community faces. The bill correctly identifies the need for specific legal protections that go beyond general vandalism statutes to address the profound harm caused by such acts, which are not merely property crimes but attacks on our shared heritage and identity.

The proposed enhanced penalties and mandatory restitution measures will provide the necessary legal tools to deter these offenses and ensure that violators are held accountable for the full scope of the damage they inflict. The provisions for public awareness campaigns and a reporting hotline are also essential steps in fostering a culture of respect and vigilance among both residents and visitors.

The Municipality of Rota stands in complete agreement with the purpose of H.B. 24-043 and its proactive approach to preserving our cherished historical and memorial sites. We are fully prepared to assist in any way necessary to support the swift passage and effective implementation of this bill.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. We look forward to seeing this legislation enacted into law.

Sincerely,

Aubry M. Hocog

Rep. Joel Camacho
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MUSEUM

September 02, 2025

MHC2025-041

The Honorable Julie A. Ogo
Representative, 1st Senatorial District
24th Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
P.O. Box 500586
Saipan, MP 96950

RE: H.B. 24-043: "To create a new criminal offense for Desecration or Theft of Memorials and Historical Sites."

Greetings Congresswoman Ogo,

The Northern Mariana Islands Museum of History & Culture ("NMI Museum") is in receipt of your letter, dated August 18, 2025, soliciting recommendations, concerns, questions, and/or comments pertaining to House Bill ("H.B.") 24-43—"to create a new criminal law offense for Desecration or Theft of Memorials and Historical Sites."

Following a comprehensive review and careful deliberation over H.B. 24-43, the NMI Museum has concluded that the bill's intend preserve historical and cultural artifacts and materials aligns with the museum's mission and priorities to increase public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the rich history and cultural traditions of the Northern Mariana Islands.

As such, the NMI Museum support the intention to protect and preserve historically, and culturally significant sites and properties offered through House Bill 24-43: "To create a new criminal offense for Desecration or Theft of Memorials and Historical Sites."

However, the NMI Museum requests that the 24th Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature to consider the below-listed recommendations, also as highlighted in the attached copy of H.B. 24-43 (HB24-043 Desecration or Theft of Memorials and Historical Sites_NMI Museum).

Proposed amendments to H.B. 24-43 includes recommended edits in strikethrough red text for omission and underlined blue text for addition:

- **Section. 2. Enactment.** ....section 806, titled, "Desecration, ~~or~~ Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, ~~and~~ Historical or Cultural Sites, and Properties" that provides as follows:

- "**§ 1806. Desecration ~~or~~ Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, ~~and~~ Historical or Cultural Sites, and Property(s).**

- Definition.

Rep. Joel Camacho
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- **Property.** monuments, statues, busts, plaques, structures, ancestral latte stones (ancient Chamorro two-part pillar), lusongs (ancestral mortar stone), signages, or other ancestral objects, materials and artifacts that are significant to a historical and cultural identities and sites.

- **Ancestral Objects.** Belonging to a community existing in 1925 or older.

- **(a) Offense.** A person commits the offense of Desecration, ~~or~~ Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, ~~and~~ Historical or Cultural Sites, and property(s) if they knowingly or intentionally:

- (1) Damage, deface, destroy, or desecrate any monument, statue, bust, plaque, structure, ancestral latte stone (ancient Chamorro two-part pillar), lusong (ancestral mortar stone), or signage located at or designated as a memorial, cultural or historical site;

- (2) Steal, remove, or unlawfully possess any component of a memorial, cultural or historical site, including ancestral latte stone (ancient Chamorro two-part pillar), lusong (ancestral mortar stone), statues, sacred items, markers, or artifacts;

- (3) Tamper with, paint, spray, urinate on, or defile any portion of such site or property;

- (4) Attempt to sell any ancestral latte stone (ancient Chamorro pillar, lusong (ancestral mortar stone), regardless of locality of finding (public or private land);

- (5) Unlawful possession ancestral artifacts and other materials that hold cultural significance to the Chamorro and Carolinian peoples;

- (6) Attempt to sell any monument, statue, bust, plaque, structure, or signage stolen from a site designated as a memorial, cultural or historical. This includes ancestral objects, artifacts and other materials that hold cultural and historical significance to the Chamorro and Carolinian peoples;

- (7) Aid, abet, or conspire in the commission of any such act.

Additionally, the NMI Museum find the penalty provision to be somewhat disproportionately severe as it does not clearly distinguish the numbers of offense. Therefore, this may be an opportunity to revise the penalty clauses to better reflect the nature of violation.

Your review and consideration of this request is greatly appreciated and please feel free to contact me for more information.

Sincerely,

Leonard Leon
Executive Director 09/02/25

P.O. Box 504570, Saipan, MP 96950 | Telephone: +1 670-664-2160 | nmimuseum.org

TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH

LEGISLATURE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

_____Regular Session, 2025 H. B. 24-43

A BILL FOR AN ACT

To create a new criminal offense for Desecration or Theft of Memorials and Historical Sites.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE 24TH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:

Section 1. Findings and Purpose. Sites of remembrance, reconciliation, and cultural identity-such as public memorials, historic landmarks, ~~and~~ commemorative structures, and cultural structures-hold deep meaning for the people of the Commonwealth and for visitors who share in our history. These places are not only local heritage sites; they are enduring symbols of peace, sacrifice, resilience, perseverance, and international goodwill. The recent theft and vandalism of the Korean Peace Memorial bust of Mr. Yong Taek Lee-a revered representation of friendship between the CNMI and the Republic of Korea-and other similar acts at historical or tourist sites are not merely property crimes. They are acts of desecration that diminish the Marianas' standing as a safe and respectful place-one that honors the sacrifices made here and the relationships those sites were built to represent.

In its current form, the CNMI's general vandalism statute-6 CMC § 1805-fails to capture the distinct and compounded harm caused when memorials or culturally significant sites are defiled. While the statute criminalizes property damage, it draws no distinction between routine vandalism-such as graffiti or minor destruction, and acts of disrespect and malice-and the desecration of structures that carry ceremonial, symbolic, or local and international importance. This lack of legal recognition leaves prosecutors and courts without the tools to reflect the full gravity of such acts. As a result, the Commonwealth's ability to deter these offenses and respond meaningfully remains limited.

The lack of a specific legal remedy-one that goes beyond merely prosecuting property damage-weakens deterrence and leaves culturally and historically significant sites vulnerable to repeat offenses. When such acts go unpunished or are treated as routine vandalism, the message conveyed is one of indifference. Without a legal distinction that captures the true nature of these violations, we cannot fully confront or correct the harm they cause.

Enactment of this "full force" legislation empowers the Commonwealth to respond decisively to acts that target the sites most sacred to our shared identity. By establishing a distinct criminal offense, imposing enhanced penalties, and requiring full restitution, this Act ensures that such violations are no longer treated as minor offenses. The Legislature affirms that cultural, memorials, and historical sites deserve not only preservation, but protection rooted in principle-protection that

addresses not just the physical damage, but the broader harm these offenses inflict on the image of our islands and our people. These crimes of desecration shall be met with the full force of the law.

Section. 2. Enactment. Title 6, Division 1, Crimes Against Person and Property, Part 2. Crimes Against Property, Chapter 3. Other Property Offenses of the Commonwealth Code is hereby amended by adding the following new section 1806, titled, "Desecration, ~~or~~ Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, ~~and~~ Historical or Cultural Sites, and Properties" that provides as follows:

"§ 1806. Desecration ~~or~~ Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, ~~and~~ Historical or Cultural Sites, and Property(s).

Definition.

Property. monuments, statues, busts, plaques, structures, ancestral latte stones (ancient Chamorro two-part pillar), lusongs (ancestral mortar stone), signages, or other ancestral objects, materials and artifacts that are significant to a historical and cultural identities and sites.

Ancestral Objects. Belonging to a community existing in 1925 or older.

(a) Offense. A person commits the offense of Desecration, ~~or~~ Theft, or Attempted Sale of Stolen Memorials, ~~and~~ Historical or Cultural Sites, and property(s) if they knowingly or intentionally:

(1) Damage, deface, destroy, or desecrate any monument, statue, bust, plaque, structure, ancestral latte stone (ancient Chamorro two-part pillar), lusong (ancestral mortar stone), or signage located at or designated as a memorial, cultural or historical site;

(2) Steal, remove, or unlawfully possess any component of a memorial, cultural or historical site, including ancestral latte stone (ancient Chamorro two-part pillar), lusong (ancestral mortar stone), statues, sacred items markers, or artifacts;

(3) Tamper with, paint, spray, urinate on, or defile any portion of such site or property;

(4) Attempt to sell any ancestral latte stone (ancient Chamorro pillar, lusong (ancestral mortar stone), regardless of locality of finding (public or private land);

(5) Unlawful possession ancestral artifacts and other materials that hold cultural significance to the Chamorro and Carolinian peoples;

(6) Attempt to sell any monument, statue, bust, plaque, structure, or signage stolen from a site designated as a memorial, cultural or historical. This includes ancestral objects, artifacts and other materials that hold cultural and historical significance to the Chamorro and Carolinian peoples;

(7) Aid, abet, or conspire in the commission of any such act.

(b) Designated Protected Sites. This section shall apply to:

(1) Sites registered by the CNMI Historic Preservation Office;

(2) Sites designated by local or municipal governments as war memorials or cultural heritage locations;

(3) Sites established or recognized in partnership with foreign governments or international peace organizations.

(c) Penalty. Any person convicted under this section shall be guilty of a felony and shall be sentenced to:

(1) Imprisonment for not less than five (5) years and up to

fifteen (15) years;

(2) A fine of not less than $25,000 and not more than $100,000;

(3) Mandatory full restitution, including the cost of repair, replacement, or recovery of stolen or damaged property;

(4) A written and public apology to the community and any affected international partner or donor;

(5) Four hundred (400) hours of community service,

preferably focused on cultural preservation, site restoration, or public education.

(d) Aggravating Circumstances. The court shall impose the maximum sentence under this section if:

(1) The offense involves international memorials or symbols of reconciliation;

(2) The act causes permanent or irreparable damage;

(3) The offense was committed with hate, malice, or commercial intent;

(4) The offender has a prior conviction under this section.

(e) Juvenile Offenders. For offenders under the age of eighteen(18):

(1) The minor shall be subject to court-ordered rehabilitative cultural education, in addition to restitution and community service;

(2) Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) shall be jointly liable for restitution.

Section 3. Enactment. Subject to codification by the CNMI Law Revision Commission, the following provision shall be enacted into law:

"101. Public Education and Protection.

The Historic Preservation Office, in coordination with the

Department of Public Safety and the Marianas Visitors Authority, shall:

(a) Post signage at all memorial and historical sites clearly stating penalties for Title 6 section 1806;

(b) Implement a public awareness campaign to educate residents and tourists about the importance of respecting CNMI heritage;

(c) Develop a reporting hotline for suspected vandalism, discretion, or suspicious activity at protected sites."

Section 4. Severability. If any provisions of this Act or the application of any such provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.

Section 5. Savings Clause. This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the statutes. Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

Section 6. Effective Date. This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the Governor, or it becoming law without such approval.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Department of Lands and Natural Resources
Big No. 1315, Anatahan Drive, Capitol Hill Caller Box 10007
Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: 670-322-9834/9830

September 03, 2025

Honorable Julie A. Ogo
Chairwoman
House Standing Committee on Tourism
24th Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
P.O. Box 500586
Saipan, MP 96950

Subject: Comment of House Bill No. 24-43, entitled, "To create a new criminal offense for Desecration or Theft of Memorials and Historical Sites"

Tirow Chairwoman Ogo,

The Department of Lands & Natural Resources (DLNR) appreciates this opportunity to comment on House Bill No. 24-43. The Department fully supports the proposed legislation. The destruction and/or theft on designated memorial and historical sites is a serious concern for the Commonwealth. In recent history, such memorials and historical sites have been unjustly inflicted with illicit activities that negatively affect the CNMI. Such actions should not be condoned nor accepted.

In addition to our support for the proposed legislation, the Department recommends an amendment under Section 2, specifically regarding "(b) Designated Protected Sites". The Department respectfully requests to include (1) sites designated under the Division of Parks and Recreation and (2) public cemeteries pursuant to Public Law 11-117, as amended. Pursuant to Public Law 14-27, the Division of Parks and Recreation is responsible for tourist sites that were formerly managed and maintained by Marianas Visitors Authority. Furthermore, pursuant to Public Law 11-117, as amended, DLNR is responsible for the ground maintenance, coordination of burial activities, and further improvements to all public cemeteries. As a fellow ground maintenance agency, DLNR understands the costs associated with such desecration. The Department finds that adding sites registered under the Division of Parks and Recreation and public cemeteries pursuant to Public Law 11-117, as amended, will strengthen the proposed legislation.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide our comment on the proposed legislation and we hope for its favorable passage in the near future.

Rep. Joel Camacho
RECEIVED
10/17/25 @9:27am
CCB

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (670)322-9830/9834 or via email at sylvan.o.igisomar@gmail.com.

Your time and collaboration in this effort is greatly appreciated.

Ghillisow,

Sylvan O. Igisomar
Secretary

CC: Speaker