



Twenty-Fourth

NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

Honorable Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building

P.O. BOX 500586

SAIPAN, MP 96950

Adopted - 3/18/2020 (18-0)

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 24.2

Date: March 4, 2026

RE: House Bill No. 24-74, SS2

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

and

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

Dear Mr. Speaker and Mr. President:

The Conference Committee to which House Bill No. 24-74, SS2 was referred, entitled:

“To appropriate funds derived from trust interest income from the Marianas Public Land Trust.”

begs leave to report as follows:

TO THE CLERK'S OFFICE
RECEIVED BY *[Signature]*
DATE 3/10/2020 TIME 3:24 PM

I. LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

- A. House Bill No. 24-74, “To appropriate funds derived from trust interest income from the Marianas Public Land Trust towards payment of household allotments of Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) benefits for November 2025.” was introduced by Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao on March 21, 2025.
- B. The House of Representatives passed House Bill No. 24-74 on First and Final Reading, by the unanimous vote of the members present, a quorum being present, during its Eighth Day, Second Regular Session on November 7, 2025.
- C. The House of Representatives transmitted House Bill No. 24-74 to the Senate on November 7, 2025.
- D. The Senate made amendments to House Bill No. 24-74 and passed the measure during its 8th, Second Regular Session on December 01, 2025, in the form of House Bill No. 24-74, Senate Substitute 2, entitled, “To appropriate funds derived from trust interest income from the Marianas Public Land Trust.”.
- E. The Senate transmitted House Bill No. 24-74, SS2, to the House of Representatives on December 01, 2025.
- F. The House of Representatives rejected the Senate’s amendments to House Bill No. 24-74, SS2, by the majority vote of the members, a quorum being present, during its Twelfth Day, Second Special Session on December 29, 2025. In accordance with the House’s action, the Speaker appointed its Conferees.
- G. The Senate was informed of the House rejection on December 29, 2025. The Senate President appointed its Conferees on January 6, 2026.
- H. On March 3, 2026, a Conference Committee Meeting was held in the Senate Chamber of the Honorable Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building, Capitol Hill, Saipan. The Conferees present deliberated and spoke to issues as reflected in this report.

II. RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee deliberated and focused its effort on major differences between House Bill No. 24-74, the House version, and House Bill No. 24-74, SS2, the Senate version. During the

Conference Committee meeting, the primary issues discussed included, but were not limited to, the following:

- A. Section 1: Senate Substitute 2 modified the "Findings and Purpose" to include justifications for the new appropriations and to acknowledge Gov. Msg. No. 24-171. The amended text is as follows:

“The Legislature acknowledges Governor David Apatang’s Gov. Msg. No. 24-171, which stated that the Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) appropriation of \$1,000,000 is no longer needed due to the conclusion of the federal shutdown on November 12, 2025, thereby averting the CNMI NAP crisis.

However, the Legislature finds that a critical need exists to appropriate the \$1,000,000 to support essential government operations. Accordingly, the Legislature determines that the funds shall be reallocated to the operations of the Office of the Mayor of Saipan, the Office of the Mayor of Tinian, and the Office of the Mayor of Rota. Furthermore, twenty-five percent (25%) of the total appropriation shall be provided to the Public School System in accordance with Article XV, Section 1(e) of the Constitution of the Northern Mariana Islands.”

- B. Section 2: Senate Substitute 2 changed the original appropriation of \$1,000,000.00 of funds derived from the preliminary distribution of trust income proceeds from MPLT to the Nutrition Assistance Program benefits for November 2025, to read as follows:

“(a) \$250,000.00 for the Public School System in accordance with the CNMI Constitution Article XV, Section 1(e);

(b) \$100,000.00 for the operations of the Office of the Mayor of Saipan;

(c) \$325,000 for the Municipality of Tinian and Aguiguan operations and public programs. The Tinian and Aguiguan Legislative Delegation shall adopt a resolution to distribute funds to respective public programs and operations of the municipality; and

(d) \$325,000.00 for the Municipality of Rota operations and public programs. The Rota Legislative Delegation shall adopt a resolution to distribute funds to respective public programs and operations of the municipality.”

- C. Section 2: Senate Substitute 2 inserted a new “Section 102. Expenditure Authority.” to read as follows:

“Section 102. Expenditure Authority.

- (a) The Commissioner of Education shall be the expenditure authority of the funds under Section 101(a).
- (b) The Mayor of Saipan shall be the expenditure authority of the funds provided under Section 101(b);
- (c) The expenditure authority of the funds provided under Section 101(c) shall be the Mayor of Tinian and Aguiguan.
- (d) The expenditure authority of the funds provided under Section 101(d) shall be the Mayor of Rota.”

The Conference Committee plays a critical role in reconciling differences between the House and Senate versions of House Bill No. 24-74. The House Conferees proposed amendments to House Bill 24-74, SS2, to address issues raised by the Senate’s amendments.

The primary difference between HB 24-74, SS2, and HB 24-74, SS2, CCS1, is the appropriation of funds derived from trust interest income from the Marianas Public Land Trust. While HB 24-74, SS2, appropriates the funds as follows: \$250,000.00 for the Public School System; \$100,000.00 for the operations of the Office of the Mayor of Saipan; \$325,000 for the Municipality of Tinian and Aguiguan operations and public programs; and \$325,000 for the Municipality of Rota operations and public programs, the Conference Committee’s version maintains the appropriation to the CNMI Public School System in accordance with the CNMI Constitution Article XV, Section 1(e) and restricts the funds for instructional expenditures. The remaining amount of \$750,000.00 is appropriated to the Marianas Visitors Authority for tourism recovery efforts. This change addresses pressing concerns regarding our current economic condition. Investing in MVA is currently critical because tourism remains the primary economic engine for the CNMI, yet the industry is facing severe instability as of early 2026. The MVA requires funding for air service stabilization and expansion; for destination enhancement and preservation amid severe budgetary constraints.

To maximize the impact of future investments, funding must be paired with increased accountability and a shift toward results-driven management. Local stakeholders are calling for a more transparent MVA that operates with clear performance metrics to justify public spending, especially given the current budget constraints. For these investments to be effective, there is a clear demand for strategic oversight that prioritizes measurable outcomes—such as direct increases in hotel occupancy and local tax revenue—ensuring that every dollar spent translates into tangible economic stability for the CNMI.

Therefore, the following amendments were adopted:

- A. Section 1. Findings and Purpose (page 2, Lines 6-12) was amended to read as follows:

“However, the Legislature finds that a critical need exists to appropriate the \$1,000,000 to support essential government operations. Accordingly, the Legislature determines that the funds shall be allocated to the operations of the Marianas Visitors Authority to augment its tourism recovery efforts, and twenty-five percent (25%) of the total appropriation shall be provided to the Public School System in accordance with Article XV, Section 1(e) of the Constitution of the Northern Mariana Islands.”

- B. Section 2. Enactment (page 2, Lines 4-11) § 101. Appropriation was amended to read as follows:

“§ 101. Appropriation.

\$1,000,000.00 of funds derived from the preliminary distribution of trust income proceeds from the Marianas Public Land Trust is hereby appropriated as follows:

(a) \$250,000.00 for the Public School System in accordance with the CNMI Constitution Article XV, Section 1(e), and the funds shall be used for instructional expenses; and

(b) \$750,000.00 for the operations of the Marianas Visitors Authority.”

- C. Section 2. Enactment (page 2, Lines 12-16) § 102. Expenditure Authority was amended to read as follows:

“§ 102. Expenditure Authority.

(a) The Commissioner of the Public School System shall be the expenditure authority of the funds under Section 101(a).

(b) The Marianas Visitors Authority Managing Director shall be the expenditure authority of the funds provided under Section 101(b).”

- D. Section 2. Enactment (page 2, Lines 17-20 and page 3, lines 1-3). A new §103 was inserted to read as follows:

“Section 103. Reporting Requirement.

(a) The Commissioner of the Public School System shall submit a report to the presiding officers of the legislature upon the expenditure of the funds provided under Section 101(a).

(b) The Marianas Visitors Authority Managing Director shall submit a report to the presiding officers of the legislature upon the expenditure of the funds provided under Section 101(b).”

The Members of the Conference Committee are in accord with all the amendments made. Therefore, the Conference Committee recommends that the House and Senate pass House Bill No. 24-74, SS2, in the form of House Bill No. 24-74, SS2, Conference Committee Substitute 1, upon the adoption and the acceptance of this Conference Committee Report.

The Conference Committee shall dissolve upon the official adoption of House Bill No. 24-74, SS2, CCS1, by both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Respectfully submitted,

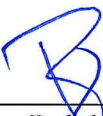
House of Representatives Conferees:



Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao
Chairman

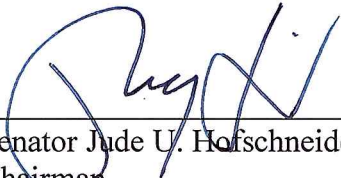


Representative John Paul P. Sablan
Member

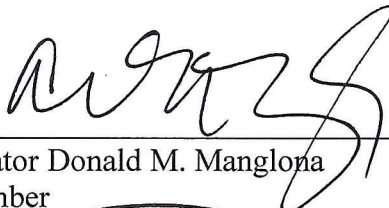


Representative Ralph N. Yumul
Member

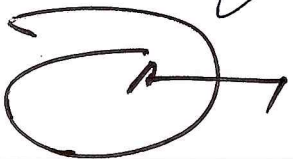
Senate Conferees:



Senator Jude U. Hofschneider
Chairman



Senator Donald M. Manglona
Member



Senator Francisco Q. Cruz
Member

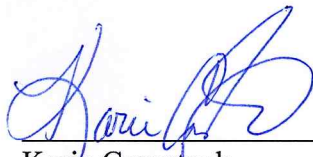


Representative Marissa R. Flores
Alternate Member



Senator Corina L. Magofna
Alternate Member

Reviewed by Legal Counsels:



Karie Comstock
House Legal Counsel



Jose A. Bermudes
Senate Legal Counsel

**TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH
LEGISLATURE**

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 6, 2025

Second Regular Session, 2025

H. B. 24-74, SS2, CCS1

A BILL FOR AN ACT

To appropriate funds derived from trust interest income from the
Marianas Public Land Trust.

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

1 **Section 1. Findings and Purpose.**

2 The Legislature acknowledges Governor David Apatang's Gov. Msg. No.
3 24-171, which stated that the Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) appropriation
4 of \$1,000,000 is no longer needed due to the conclusion of the federal shutdown
5 on November 12, 2025, thereby averting the CNMI NAP crisis.

6 However, the Legislature finds that a critical need exists to appropriate the
7 \$1,000,000 to support essential government operations. Accordingly, the
8 Legislature determines that the funds shall be allocated to the operations of the
9 Marianas Visitors Authority to augment its tourism recovery efforts, and twenty-
10 five percent (25%) of the total appropriation shall be provided to the Public
11 School System in accordance with Article XV, Section 1(e) of the Constitution of
12 the Northern Mariana Islands.

1 **Section 2. Enactment.** Notwithstanding CNMI laws, rules, and regulations
2 to the contrary, the following provision is hereby enacted into law:

3 **“§ 101. Appropriation.**

4 “§ 101. Appropriation.

5 \$1,000,000.00 of funds derived from the preliminary distribution of trust
6 income proceeds from the Marianas Public Land Trust is hereby appropriated as
7 follows:

8 (a) \$250,000.00 for the Public School System in accordance with the CNMI
9 Constitution Article XV, Section 1(e), and the funds shall be used for instructional
10 expenses;

11 (b) \$750,000.00 for the operations of the Marianas Visitors Authority.

12 Section 102. Expenditure Authority.

13 (a) The Commissioner of the Public School System shall be the
14 expenditure authority of the funds under Section 101(a).

15 (b) The Marianas Visitors Authority Managing Director shall be the
16 expenditure authority of the funds provided under Section 101(b);

17 Section 103. Reporting Requirement.

18 (a) The Commissioner of the Public School System shall submit a report to
19 the presiding officers of the legislature upon the expenditure of the
20 funds provided under Section 101(a).

1 (b) The Marianas Visitors Authority Managing Director shall submit a
2 report to the presiding officers of the legislature upon the expenditure of
3 the funds provided under Section 101(b).”

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

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

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

Prefiled: 11/6/2025

Date: _____

Introduced by: /s/ Rep. Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao

/s/ Rep. Roy C.A. Ada

/s/ Rep. Vincent R. Aldan

HOUSE BILL 24-74, SS2, CCS1

/s/ Rep. Daniel I. Aquino Jr.
/s/ Rep. Roman C. Benavente
/s/ Rep. Angelo A. Camacho
/s/ Rep. Diego V. F. Camacho
/s/ Rep. Joel C. Camacho
/s/ Rep. Joseph A. Flores
/s/ Rep. Marissa R. Flores
/s/ Rep. Thomas J. DLC. Manglona
/s/ Rep. Malcolm J. Omar
/s/ Rep. Raymond U. Palacios
/s/ Rep. John Paul P. Sablan
/s/ Rep. Edmund S. Villagomez
/s/ Rep. Denita Kaipat Yangetmai
/s/ Rep. Ralph N. Yumul

Reviewed for legal sufficiency by:
/s/ Joseph L.G. Taijeron, Jr. 11/6/2025
House Legal Counsel