

**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:**

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

1 In its current form, the CNMI’s general vandalism statute—6 CMC
2 § 1805—fails to capture the distinct and compounded harm caused when memorials
3 or culturally significant sites are defiled. While the statute criminalizes property
4 damage, it draws no distinction between routine vandalism—such as graffiti or
5 minor destruction—and the desecration of structures that carry ceremonial,
6 symbolic, or international importance. This lack of legal recognition leaves
7 prosecutors and courts without the tools to reflect the full gravity of such acts. As
8 a result, the Commonwealth’s ability to deter these offenses and respond
9 meaningfully remains limited.

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

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

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

4 **Section. 2. Enactment.** Title 6, Division 1, Crimes Against Person and
5 Property, Part 2. Crimes Against Property, Chapter 3. Other Property Offenses of
6 the Commonwealth Code is hereby amended by adding the following new section
7 1806, titled, “Desecration or Theft of Memorials and Historical Sites” that provides
8 as follows:

9 **“§ 1806. Desecration or Theft of Memorials and**
10 **Historical Sites.**

11 **(a) Offense.** A person commits the offense of Desecration,
12 or Theft of Memorials and Historical Sites if they knowingly or
13 intentionally:

14 (1) Damage, deface, destroy, or desecrate any monument,
15 statue, bust, plaque, structure, or signage located at or designated
16 as a memorial or historical site;

17 (2) Steal, remove, or unlawfully possess any component of
18 a memorial or historical site, including statues, sacred items,
19 markers, or artifacts;

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

1 (4) Aid, abet, or conspire in the commission of any such
2 act.

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

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

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

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

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

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

15 (2) A fine of not less than \$25,000 and not more than
16 \$100,000;

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 (2) The act causes permanent or irreparable damage;

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 **“101. Public Education and Protection.**

21 The Historic Preservation Office, in coordination with the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Prefiled: 7/29/2025

Date: 07/29/25

Introduced by: _____

Rep. Julie M. A. Ogo

Reviewed for legal sufficiency by:

Joseph S. Daj
House Legal Counsel

Date: 7-29-25

