



## HOUSE JOURNAL FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION, 2025

**1<sup>st</sup> Day, Fourth Special Session**

**Monday, July 14, 2025**

**CLERK'S NOTE:** *The publicly available feed experienced a brief technical issue during the convening of the session and portions of the attendance roll. These initial proceedings were not captured in the official audio record. The following is a summary of those proceedings.*

*The House of Representatives of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature convened its First Day, Fourth Special Session on Monday, July 14, 2025, at 02:14 p.m., in the House Chamber on Capitol Hill, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.*

*The Honorable Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez, Speaker of the House, presided.*

*A moment of silence was observed.*

### ROLL CALL

*The Clerk called the roll for attendance with the following results:*

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	Present
Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan	Present
Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino Jr.	Absent (Excused)
Representative Blas Jonathan "BJ" Tenorio Attao	Present
Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente	Present
Representative Angelo Atalig Camacho	Present
Representative Diego Vincent Fejeran Camacho	Present
Representative Joel Castro Camacho	Present
Representative Joseph Arriola Flores	Present
Representative Marissa Renee Flores	Present
Representative Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona	Present
Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo	Present
Representative Malcolm Jason Omar	Absent (Excused)
Representative Raymond Ulloa Palacios	Present
Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar	Present
Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan	Present
Representative Patrick Hofschneider San Nicolas	Present
Representative Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez	Present
Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai	Present
Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul	Present

Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, 18 members are present and 2 members are absent.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With 18 members present, a quorum is duly established. Let the record reflect that Representatives Daniel Aquino, Jr. and Malcolm Omar are excused for today's session. We now move down to Item No. 2, Public Comments. The podium is now open to receive comments. Please state your name and the entity you represent, you have five minutes. If you have prepared statements, please submit them to the Sergeant-at-Arms for forwarding to the Clerk's office.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

*Public Comments were presented by five individuals on the following items:*

**H. B. NO. 24-35:** To amend certain provisions of the CNMI Good Samaritan Act [7 CMC § 2801 *et seq.*]; and for other purposes.

**H. B. NO. 24-36:** To establish a Prescription Drug Monitoring Program in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; and for other purposes.

**H. RES. NO. 24-11:** To respectfully urge the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to ensure meaningful and equitable involvement of Northern Marianas Descent (NMD) persons, and recognition of the Northern Mariana Islands' traditional knowledge, stewardship, and proprietary rights in all current and future activities related to ocean exploration, marine research, data ownership, and commercialization of marine resources in the Mariana Trench and surrounding waters.

*There being no further public comments presented, the Chair moved down to Item No. 3, Adoption of Journals, and recognized the Clerk.*

### **ADOPTION OF JOURNALS**

*The Clerk announced the following House Journal:*

*First Day, Second Special Session Journal – May 15, 2025*

*The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.*

*The Floor Leader moved for the adoption of First Day, Second Special Session Journal – May 15, 2025; the motion was seconded. The Chair opened the floor for discussion, and there being no discussion on the floor, the motion to adopt First Day, Second Special Session Journal – May 15, 2025 was carried by voice vote. There was no "nay" vote.*

*The Chair moved down to Item No. 4, Introduction of Bills, and recognized Representative Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona under House Bills.*

### **INTRODUCTION OF BILL**

***House Bills:***

*Representative Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona formally introduced the following bill, which was then referred to the House Committee on Commerce:*

**H. B. NO. 24-34:** To streamline business licensing in the Commonwealth by establishing a business start-up task force, a digital one-stop platform, a support center, and a conditional business licensing process. **Prefiled by: REP. THOMAS J. DLC. MANGLONA** of Saipan, Precinct 5 (*for himself*, Representative Roy C. A. Ada)

*Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao formally introduced the following bill on behalf of Representative Malcolm Jason Omar, which was then referred to the House Committees on Health and Welfare, and Judicial Governmental Operations:*

**H. B. NO. 24-35:** To amend certain provisions of the CNMI Good Samaritan Act [7 CMC § 2801 *et seq.*]; and for other purposes. **Prefiled by: REP. MALCOLM J. OMAR** of Saipan, Precinct 4 (*for himself*)

*Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao formally introduced the following bill on behalf of Representative Malcolm Jason Omar, which was then referred to the House Committees on Health and Welfare, and Judicial and Governmental Operations:*

**H. B. NO. 24-36:** To establish a Prescription Drug Monitoring Program in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; and for other purposes. **Prefiled by: REP. MALCOLM J. OMAR** of Saipan, Precinct 4 (*for himself*)

*Representative Marissa Renee Flores formally introduced the following bill, which was then referred to the House Committees on Judicial and Governmental Operations, and Gaming:*

**H. B. NO. 24-37:** To suspend the operations of the Commonwealth Casino Commission; to transfer casino regulatory functions to the Commonwealth Lottery Commission on an interim basis; to establish a Division of Gaming within the Department of Finance; and for other purposes. **Prefiled by: REP. MARISSA R. FLORES** of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for herself*)

*Representative Diego Vincent Fejeran Camacho formally introduced the following bill, which was then referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means:*

**H. B. NO. 24-38:** To establish a dedicated CNMI Emergency Reserve Fund (“Rainy Day Fund”) with annual mandatory deposits and procedures for fund disbursement in times of declared emergency, while ensuring fiscal accountability.

**Prefiled by: REP. DIEGO V. F. CAMACHO** of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Representatives Roman C. Benavente, and Marissa R. Flores)

*Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan formally introduced the following bill, which was then referred to the House Committee on Judicial and Governmental Operations:*

**H. B. NO. 24-39:** To establish Treatment Program Enforcement Officers within the Judiciary to carry out enforcement, supervision, and monitoring functions essential to the success of court supervised treatment programs, and to ensure that these officers are fully recognized as law enforcement personnel under Commonwealth law. **Prefiled by: REP. JOHN PAUL P. SABLAN** of Saipan, Precinct 2 (*for himself*, Representatives Vincent R. Aldan, Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Roman C. Benavente, Joel C. Camacho, Marissa R. Flores, Thomas J. DIC. Manglona, Julie M. A. Ogo, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul)

*The Chair moved down to House Local Bills and recognized Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao.*

#### ***House Local Bills:***

*Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao formally introduced the following bill:*

**H. L. B. NO. 24-18:** To appropriate \$75,000.00 from revenues collected for the Third Senatorial District pursuant to Saipan Local Law 22-06; and for other purposes. **Prefiled by: REP. BLAS JONATHAN “BJ” T. ATTAO** of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for himself*, Representatives Roman C. Benavente, Marissa R. Flores, John Paul P. Sablan, and Ralph N. Yumul)

*Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente formally introduced the following bill:*

**H. L. B. NO. 24-19:** To appropriate the remaining fund balance of \$260,670.00 from the Third Senatorial District Developers Infrastructure Tax Fund allotted to Precinct I under Saipan Local Law 22-16; and for other purposes. **Prefiled by: REP. ROMAN C. BENAVENTE** of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada, Vincent R. Aldan, Diego V. F. Camacho, and Raymond U. Palacios)

*There being no items under House Legislative Initiatives, the Chair moved down to Item No. 5, Introduction of Resolutions, and recognized Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai under House Resolutions.*

#### ***House Legislative Initiatives:***

None

## INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

### *House Resolutions:*

*Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai formally introduced the following resolution:*

**H. RES. NO. 24-11:** To respectfully urge the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to ensure meaningful and equitable involvement of Northern Marianas Descent (NMD) persons, and recognition of the Northern Mariana Islands' traditional knowledge, stewardship, and proprietary rights in all current and future activities related to ocean exploration, marine research, data ownership, and commercialization of marine resources in the Mariana Trench and surrounding waters. **Prefiled by: REP. DENITA KAIPAT YANGETMAI** of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for herself*)

*There being no objection on the floor, H. Res. No. 24-11 is introduced by the Committee of the Whole and subsequently placed on the Resolution Calendar.*

*There being no items under House Joint Resolutions and House Commemorative Resolutions, the Chair moved down to House Concurrent Resolutions and recognized Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan.*

### *House Joint Resolutions:*

None

### *House Commemorative Resolutions:*

None

### *House Concurrent Resolutions:*

*Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan formally introduced the following resolution:*

**H. C. R. NO. 24-2:** To Define and Identify General Revenue and Approve revenues and resources of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, as identified pursuant to Article III, Section 9(a) of the Constitution, as amended, and 1 CMC, Division 7, for Fiscal Year 2026, beginning October 1, 2025, and ending on September 30, 2026. **Prefiled by: REP. JOHN PAUL P. SABLÁN** of Saipan, Precinct 2 (*for himself*, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada, Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao Roman C. Benavente, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Edmund S. Villagomez, and Denita Kaipat Yangetmai)

*There being no objection on the floor, H. C. R. No. 24-2 is introduced by the Committee of the Whole.*

### **MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR**

*The Clerk announced the following Messages from the Governor:*

GOV. COMM. 24-29: (6/18/2025) Certifying and granting approval for Mr. Timothy S. Deleon Guerrero, Junior Solid Waste Engineer, at the Office of Planning and Development to receive an annual salary of \$80,000. [For info]

GOV. COMM. 24-30: (6/26/2025) Certifying and granting approval for Mr. John P. Furnari, Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Division, at the Attorney General's Office to receive an annual salary of \$78,000. [For info]

GOV. COMM. 24-31: (6/25/2025) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. L. B. No. 24-9, D2, (To amend Rota Local Law 23-15, to appropriate \$155,000.00 for the continued operation of the Rota Casino Gaming Commission; and for other purposes.). Became Rota Local Law 24-02 [For info]

GOV. COMM. 24-32: (6/25/2025) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. L. B. No. 24-16, (To re-appropriate \$26,000 allotted under Saipan Local Law 20-26 and re-appropriate \$25,000 allotted under Saipan Local Law 23-10; and for other purposes.). Became Saipan Local Law 24- 03 [For info]

GOV. COMM. 24-33: (6/25/2025) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. L. B. No. 24-12, (To appropriate \$2,500,000 from revenues collected pursuant to Saipan Local Law 11-2 as amended; and for other purposes.). Became Saipan Local Law 24-04 [For info]

GOV. COMM. 24-34: (6/30/2025) Governor confirms no revised FY26 budget will be submitted; original April 1 proposal stands. Administration is pursuing a \$29M pension bond with MPLT, dependent on legislative withholding authority. [For info]

GOV. COMM. 24-35: (7/9/2025) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. L. B. No. 24-8, (To appropriate the remaining balance of \$85,500 under Saipan Local Law 23-04 for the repair, maintenance and improvements of recreational facilities in Precinct IV; and for other purposes.). Became Saipan Local Law 24-05 [For info]

*The Chair opened the floor for discussion and recognized Representative Blas Jonathan "BJ" Tenorio Attao.*

Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to extend our appreciation to the administration for signing House Local Bill No. 24-12 into Saipan Local Law No. 24-4. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*The Chair recognized Representative Joel Castro Camacho.*

Representative Joel Castro Camacho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to formally thank the administration for signing into law House Local Law No. 24-8, which is now Saipan Local Law No. 24-05. Thank you.

*The Chair recognized Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan.*

Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to formally express our thanks for Governor Communication No. 24-32, which had approved and signed into law House Local Bill No. 24-16, which became Saipan Local Law No. 24-3. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*The Chair recognized Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo.*

Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to extend to the administration and Lieutenant Governor David Apatang for signing House Local Bill No. 24-9, which turned into Rota Local Law No. 24-02. Thank you.

*Pursuant to the action taken, Governor Communication No. 24-34, referencing, “Governor confirms no revised FY26 budget will be submitted; original April 1 proposed stands. Administration is pursuing a \$29M pension bond with MPLT, dependent on legislative withholding authority.”, was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.*

*The Chair moved back up to House Concurrent Resolutions under Item No. 5, Introduction of Resolutions.*

## **INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS**

### ***House Concurrent Resolutions:***

*With no objection on the floor, the Chair placed the following resolution on the Resolution Calendar:*

**H. C. R. NO. 24-2:** To Define and Identify General Revenue and Approve revenues and resources of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, as identified pursuant to Article III, Section 9(a) of the Constitution, as amended, and 1 CMC, Division 7, for Fiscal Year 2026, beginning October 1, 2025, and ending on September 30, 2026. **Prefiled by: REP. JOHN PAUL P. SABLAN** of Saipan, Precinct 2 (*for himself*, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada, Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao Roman C. Benavente, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Edmund S. Villagomez, and Denita Kaipat Yangetmai)



*The Chair moved down to Item No. 7, Senate Communications, and recognized the Clerk.*

### **SENATE COMMUNICATIONS**

*The Clerk announced the following Senate Communications:*

SEN. COMM. 24-23: (6/23/2025) Returning H. J. R. 24-2, entitled, “To formally recognize and commemorate the National Conference of State Legislatures on its 50th anniversary.”, which was adopted by the Senate without amendments on June 23, 2025. [For info]

SEN. COMM. 24-24: (6/23/2025) Informing the House that the Senate in its 1st Day, Third Special Session, on June 23, 2025, adopted Conference Committee Report No. 24-01 on H. B. NO. 24-17, SD1, CCS1, entitled, “To amend 2 CMC § 2174 to provide the Commonwealth Ports Authority greater autonomy in managing its finances.”, by the unanimous vote a quorum being present. [For info]

SEN. COMM. 24-25: (6/24/2025) Informing the House that the Senate accepted and adopted the House amendments to S. J. R. NO. 24-01, which now reads: S. J. R. NO. 24-01, HD1, entitled, “Supporting the Commonwealth Ports Authority’s request for exemption from Federal Limitations on Scheduled Chinese Air Service to the CNMI, urging the Reinstatement of Annex VI under the U.S.-China Air Transport Agreement of 2007, and urging the full and immediate implementation of the CNMI Economic Vitality and Security Travel Authorization Program (EVS-TAP).” On June 23, 2025. [For info]

SEN. COMM. 24-26: (6/24/2025) Transmitting for House action S. B. NO. 24-04, entitled, “To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian language education in the CNMI.”, which was passed by the Senate on June 23, 2025. [For action]

SEN. COMM. 24-27: (6/24/2025) Transmitting for House action S. B. NO. 24-11, SD1, entitled, “To regulate off-road vehicles including ATVs, SxS, and UTVs; and for other purposes.”, which was passed by the Senate on June 23, 2025. [For action]

SEN. COMM. 24-28: (6/24/2025) Transmitting for House action S. B. NO. 24-13, SD1, entitled, “To enact a whistleblower protection provision for Commonwealth government and autonomous agency employees reporting on prohibited personnel practices; to provide whistleblower rewards for individuals who report underpayments of taxes; to clarify the mechanism for the payment of rewards for disclosures leading to the recovery of public funds; and for other purposes.”, which was passed by the Senate on June 23, 2025. [For action]

SEN. COMM. 24-29: (6/24/2025) Transmitting for House action S. B. NO. 24-28, SD1, entitled, “To amend 6 CMC § 3113; to establish disorderly conduct and public



intoxication crimes; and for other purposes.”, which was passed by the Senate on June 23, 2025. [For action]

SEN. COMM. 24-30: (6/24/2025) Transmitting for House action S. B. NO. 24-31, SD1, entitled, “To ensure food safety and support small food entrepreneurs sell non-time/temperature control (TCS) for safety food and home-cooked meals; and for other purposes.”, which was passed by the Senate on June 23, 2025. [For action]

*The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.*

*The Floor Leader moved to accept Senate Communication No. 24-23 through 24-30.*

*The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to accept Senate Communication No. 24-23 through 24-30 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.*

*Pursuant to the action taken, Senate Communication No. 24-26, referencing, S. B. NO. 24-04, entitled, “To advance indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian language education in the CNMI.”, was referred to the House Committee on Education; Senate Communication No. 24-27, referencing, S. B. No. 24-11, SD1, entitled, “To regulate off-road vehicles including ATVs, SxS, and UTVs; and for other purposes.”, was referred to the House Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure, and Judicial and Governmental Operations; Senate Communication No. 24-28, referencing, S. B. NO. 24-13, SD1, entitled, “To enact a whistleblower protection provision for Commonwealth government and autonomous agency employees reporting on prohibited personnel practices; to provide whistleblower rewards for individuals who report underpayments of taxes; to clarify the mechanism for the payment of rewards for disclosures leading to the recovery of public funds; and for other purposes.”, was referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations; Senate Communication No. 24-29, referencing, S. B. NO. 24-28, SD1, entitled, “To amend 6 CMC § 3113; to establish disorderly conduct and public intoxication crimes; and for other purposes.”, was referred to the House Committee on Judicial and Governmental Operations; and Senate Communication No. 24-30, referencing, S. B. NO. 24-31, SD1, entitled, “To ensure food safety and support small food entrepreneurs sell non-time/temperature control (TCS) for safety food and home-cooked meals; and for other purposes.”, was referred to the House Committees on Health and Welfare, and Commerce.*

*The Chair moved down to Item No. 8, House Communications, and recognized the Clerk.*

## **HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS**

*The Clerk announced the following House Communications:*

HSE. COMM. 24-36: (6/20/2025) From Representative Angelo A. Camacho informing the Speaker that he will be out of the Commonwealth on official business from June 23, 2025 to June 30, 2025 and request to be excused from all legislative sessions, SNILD sessions, and committee meetings. [For info]

HSE. COMM. 24-37: (6/30/2025) From Floor Leader Marissa R. Flores, informing the Speaker that she will be out of the Commonwealth on official business from July 2, 2025—July 8, 2025 and request to be excused from all legislative sessions, SNILD sessions, and committee meetings. [For info]

HSE. COMM. 24-38: (7/7/2025) Representative Malcolm J. Omar informing the Speaker that he will be out of the Commonwealth on personal matters from July 8, 2025—July 18, 2025, and requests to be excused from any legislative sessions, SNILD sessions, committee meetings, and official functions during his absence. [For info]

HSE. COMM. 24-39: (7/9/2025) From Representative Julie M. A. Ogo informing the Speaker that she will be out of the Commonwealth on official business beginning July 18, 2025—July 24, 2025 and request to be excused from all legislative sessions, committee meetings, and any official functions. [For info]

*The Chair opened the floor for discussion, and there was none. There being no items under Item No. 9, Communications from the Judicial Branch, the Chair moved down to Item No. 10, Communications from Departments & Agencies, and recognized the Clerk.*

### **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE JUDICIAL BRANCH**

None

### **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENTS & AGENCIES**

*The Clerk announced the following Communications from the Departments & Agencies:*

DEPT./AGCY. COMM. 24-10: (7/1/2025) Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) Board transmitting Board Resolution No. 2025-09, entitled, “A Resolution Honoring the Life, Service, and Legacy of Calistro T. Reyes, Jr.”. [For info]

DEPT./AGCY. COMM. 24-11: (rec’d 7/1/2025) Public School System (PSS) re: FY 2026 Budget Request. [For info]

DEPT./AGCY. COMM. 24-12: (7/8/2025) Department of Public Lands (DPL) submitting: DPL’s Financial Statements and Independent Auditor’s Report for FY 2022. [For info]

*The Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the Chair moved down to Item No. 11, Miscellaneous Communications, and recognized the Clerk.*

### **MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS**

*The Clerk announced the following Miscellaneous Communications:*

MISC. COMM. 24-43: (6/26/2025) Chairperson, Committee on Health, 20th Youth Congress – Sen. Ayden Sean C. Yumul: Request for comments on Y.C.B. No. 20-01, entitled: “To establish ‘Prinimeti’ and ‘Akkapal’ as the official pledge to the CNMI flag, honoring both the official languages and cultures of our Commonwealth; and for other purposes.” [Comment Deadline: 7/7/25]

MISC. COMM. 24-44: (5/21/2025 rec’d 7/3/2025) Department of the Navy Notice of Intent – MITT SEIS/OEIS Public Scoping & Comment Period (Public Comment: 6/7–7/55/25 CHST). [For info]

MISC. COMM. 24-45: (6/6/2025 rec’d 7/3/2025) USMC Revised Draft EIS – CNMI Joint Military Training (Public Comment: 6/6–8/20/25). [For info]

MISC. COMM. 24-46: (7/1/2025) MPLT to consider low-interest loan scenario for \$29M pension obligation bond, contingent on legislative action within 90 days. [For info]

MISC. COMM. 24-47: (rec’d 7/3/2025) Northern Marianas College (NMC) re: FY 2026 Budget Request. [For info]

*The Chair opened the floor for discussion, and there was none.*

*Pursuant to the action taken, Miscellaneous Communication No. 24-43, referencing, “Chairperson, Committee on Health, 20th Youth Congress – Sen. Ayden Sean C. Yumul: Request for comments on Y.C.B. No. 20-01, entitled: “To establish ‘Prinimeti’ and ‘Akkapal’ as the official pledge to the CNMI flag, honoring both the official languages and cultures of our Commonwealth; and for other purposes.””, was referred to the House Committee on Education; Miscellaneous Communication No. 24-44, referencing, “Department of the Navy Notice of Intent – MITT SEIS/OEIS Public Scoping & Comment Period (Public Comment: 6/7–7/55/25 CHST).”, was referred to the House Committees on Federal and Foreign Affairs, and Natural Resources; Miscellaneous Communication No. 24-45, referencing, “USMC Revised Draft EIS – CNMI Joint Military Training (Public Comment: 6/6–8/20/25).”, was referred to the House Committees on Federal and Foreign Affairs, and Natural Resources; and Miscellaneous Communication No. 24-46, referencing, “MPLT to consider low-interest loan scenario for \$29M pension obligation bond, contingent on legislative action within 90 days.”, was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.*

*There being nothing further under Miscellaneous Communication, the Chair moved down to Item No. 12, Reports of Standing Committees, and recognized the Clerk.*

## **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

*The Clerk announced the following Reports of Standing Committees:*

**S. C. R. NO. 24-12:** Reporting on H. B. No. 24-13, entitled: “To amend the fee structure for the Office of the Registrar of Corporations under the Department of

Commerce and to remove daily penalty fees.” Your House Committee on Commerce recommends that the House pass the bill in the form of **H. B. NO. 24-13, HD1**.

*The Floor Leader moved for the adoption of the following:*

**S. C. R. NO. 24-12:** Reporting on H. B. No. 24-13, entitled: “To amend the fee structure for the Office of the Registrar of Corporations under the Department of Commerce and to remove daily penalty fees.” Your House Committee on Commerce recommends that the House pass the bill in the form of **H. B. NO. 24-13, HD1**.

*The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to adopt S. C. R. No. 24-12 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.*

*There being no items under Item No. 13, Reports of Special and Conference Committees, and Item No. 14, Unfinished Business, the Chair moved down to Item No. 15, Resolution Calendar, and recognized the Floor Leader.*

## **REPORTS OF SPECIAL AND CONFERENCE COMMITTEES**

None

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

## **RESOLUTION CALENDAR**

*The Floor Leader moved for the adoption of C. Res. No. 24-4:*

**C. RES. NO. 24-4:** To commemorate the life, legacy, and dedicated service of the late Dr. John Lamphear Doyle III, for his exceptional contributions to medicine and his profound impact on the well-being of the people of the CNMI, and to extend sincere condolences to his bereaved family.

*The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to adopt C. Res. No. 24-4 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.*

*The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.*

*The Floor Leader moved for the adoption of H. Res. No. 24-11:*

**H. RES. NO. 24-11:** To respectfully urge the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to ensure meaningful and equitable involvement of Northern Marianas Descent (NMD) persons, and recognition of the Northern Mariana Islands' traditional knowledge, stewardship, and proprietary rights in all current and future activities related to ocean exploration, marine research, data ownership, and commercialization of marine resources in the Mariana Trench and surrounding waters.

*The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion.*

*The Chair called for recess.*

*The House recessed at 2:59 p.m.*

*Recess*

*The House reconvened at 3:05 p.m.*

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Before we went on recess, we were under discussion on House Resolution No. 24-11. We will go ahead and continue with that discussion. I recognize Representative Denita Yangetmai.

Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are going to do a technical change on line 12. We will change the name of Dr. Richard W. Spinrad to Laura Grimm, NOAA Administrator.

*The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the Chair proceeded to the main motion.*

*The motion to adopt H. Res. No. 24-11 was carried by voice vote. There was no "nay" vote.*

*The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.*

*The Floor Leader moved for the adoption of H. C. R. No. 24-2:*

**H. C. R. NO. 24-2:** To Define and Identify General Revenue and Approve revenues and resources of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, as identified pursuant to Article III, Section 9(a) of the Constitution, as amended, and 1 CMC, Division 7, for Fiscal Year 2026, beginning October 1, 2025, and ending on September 30, 2026.

*The motion was seconded. The Chair opened the floor for discussion and recognized Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan.*

Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As your Chair, the Senate Committee of Ways and Means and the author of this House Concurrent Resolution, I appeal to the full body for their support. If there are any questions from the members that are not part of the ways and means, I stand ready to answer if there are any questions with regards to the concurrent resolution. Thank you.

*There being no further discussion on the floor, the Chair recognized the Clerk to call the roll.*

*The Clerk called the roll on the motion to adopt H. C. R. No. 24-2 with the following results:*

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	Yes
Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan	Yes
Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino Jr.	Absent (Excused)
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao	Yes
Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente	Yes
Representative Angelo Atalig Camacho	Yes
Representative Diego Vincent Fejeran Camacho	Yes
Representative Joel Castro Camacho	Yes
Representative Joseph Arriola Flores	Yes
Representative Marissa Renee Flores	Yes
Representative Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona	Yes
Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo	Yes
Representative Malcolm Jason Omar	Absent (Excused)
Representative Raymond Ulloa Palacios	Yes
Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar	Yes
Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan	Yes
Representative Patrick Hofschneider San Nicolas	Yes
Representative Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez	Yes
Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai	Yes
Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul	Yes

Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, all 18 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 18 members present voting “yes,” House Concurrent Resolution No. 24-2 is hereby adopted. Thank you, colleagues. We now move down to Item No. 16, Bill Calendar, and I recognized the Floor Leader.

## **BILL CALENDAR**

*The Floor Leader moved for the passage of First and Final Reading of H. B. No. 24-13, HDI:*

**H. B. NO. 24-13, HD1:** To amend the fee structure for the Office of the Registrar of Corporations under the Department of Commerce and to remove daily penalty fees.

*The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the Chair recognized the Clerk to call the roll.*

*The Clerk called the roll on the motion for the passage of H. B. No. 24-13, HD1, on First and Final Reading, with the following results:*

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	Yes
Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan	Yes
Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino Jr.	Absent (Excused)
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao	Yes
Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente	Yes
Representative Angelo Atalig Camacho	Yes
Representative Diego Vincent Fejeran Camacho	Yes
Representative Joel Castro Camacho	Yes
Representative Joseph Arriola Flores	Yes
Representative Marissa Renee Flores	Yes
Representative Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona	Yes
Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo	Yes
Representative Malcolm Jason Omar	Absent (Excused)
Representative Raymond Ulloa Palacios	Yes
Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar	Yes
Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan	Yes
Representative Patrick Hofschneider San Nicolas	Yes
Representative Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez	Yes
Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai	Yes
Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul	Yes

Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, all 18 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With 18 members present voting “yes,” House Bill No. 24-13, House Draft 1 hereby passes the House. We now move down to Item No. 17, Miscellaneous Business, and I recognize Representative Roman Benavente.

### **MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS**

Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, *chamo la'la'la'lu yao bai finu Chamoru?*

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: *Hunggan.*

Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente: *Esti na bill i introduce i pagu nâni, iyi House Local Bill No. 24-16. I am sorry, House Local Bill No. 24-19. Hu chu'chule i 24-16 lao talaika i 24-19.*



*Lao na 24-19 esit sa na introduce esti na bill. I 24-16, tres sientus pesos, tres sientu miyon, ti bai halom miyon. Lão tres sientus mit pesos. Mana sanigisti ni para chogue gi chalan. Ya eyu na chãlan disti S.I.S. (Saipan Internation School), gu mãnao nu halom i chule i left. I left-hand side. Gu mãnao nu hanao esta familian Chong, familian Cepeda, i sanalom, yan guaha sa familian Teno. Mãna sa guaha gi. Lao ma chule ti 'tungo hayi chumuli ayi i salãpi. Lai i spending authority ni esti 26 bai i 22-16 i DPW (Department of Public Works) Ti tungo ayi chumuli ayi i salãpi? Lao siempre ta sotda. Sa masha i hafa taimanu na kosas ma chogue gai lastru? Ya pagu edya soblaña i dos sientu si sienta mit na sobla gua. Ya i sientus yan si penta. Pesos na so 'sobla. Pues iyi gi na mala gu bai sãnggan esti taiguini sa man ma 'maisen i publiku niyu guatu na lugãd. Kao siña man ma chogui iyi sa ni chalan. Sa esta gama appropriate esti na salãpi disti 22<sup>nd</sup> Legislature. Ya ma chule i, uyi pues, tu maigi trenta nuebi mit gi halom esti na salãpi i tres sientus mit. Pues tu mai mano esti, iyi gi na debi i tahayu yu malagu bai share na todudu man membro. Maila ta fan respetu lai. Kada precinct iyi gi na man halom todudu si Representatives Roy Ada, Joseph Flores, guaha, Diego Camacho, yan Raymond Palacios. Manalu na i todudu guine. Sa hafa? Put precinct esti nei, yan i respeta i precinct. Pues maila ya ta fan ayuda ya ta respeta. Sa esti gi nei na guaha fuetsa angin man dañã todudu. Ya maila ta respeta. Enaoa, Mr. Speaker. Si yu 'us ma 'asi.*

*The Chair recognized Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan.*

Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that under miscellaneous business it is undebatable, but I think, just alluding to Representative Benavente's concern, I think the funding level was actually at three hundred some thousand. But with the assessment of DPW (Department of Public Works) fees, it has perhaps dropped down. I do not really think necessarily, as Chair of SNILD, that any other precinct took the money. I do not think that is that case. I think, maybe, Representative Roman Benavente would try to circle back to DPW and check if they have already taken out the administrative fee. So, now that he is reapproaching this funding, there might be another administrative fee going to be imposed. So, maybe the two hundred sixty might go even further lower. So, I think there is still a lot of work that needs to be done on the findings. Thank you. I just do not think that any other precinct took the money. I think that money was still in precinct two. Thank you. I just do not think any other precinct took the money. I think precinct one still has the money.

*The Chair recognized Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente.*

Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that DPW's administrative fee have changed. If it would be 5% out of the 300,000, it would at least be 15,000. And I do not mind that. I fully understand that. We all understand that the DPW takes the fee because they need it. We use their engineers, their people to monitor and everything. But like I said, whatever that we do, we just have to figure it out because you cannot cheat numbers.

*The Chair recognized Representative Blas Jonathan "BJ" Tenorio Attao.*

Representative Blas Jonathan "BJ" Tenorio Attao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the public comments brought up the issue regarding the developer's infrastructure tax on military projects. I know that under the Covenant, Section 703(b) does allow the subcontractors or the private entities to be infused with the taxes or be responsible to pay those taxes. I thank, like the Speaker

mentioned, thanking Delegate King-Hinds and Representative Marissa Flores, our Floor Leader for bringing that issue into the light among other individuals and groups within the CNMI. Before we move to adjournment, Mr. Speaker, I have a draft joint resolution readily available. I am asking each member of the House that are present today to please sign off on this joint resolution so we can prefile and set a position from the CNMI. At least from the Legislative Branch that we support and enforcing this responsibility on the military subcontractors. So, that they can pay their fair share of taxes here in the CNMI. Then we can utilize those funds to address our financial shortfalls. Hopefully get to use those money to pay down our deficit reduction and other obligations that we owe as a government. With that said, thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker.

*The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.*

Floor Leader Marissa Renee Flores: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize, colleagues. This is my only time to really span out and talk to my constituents and the people of the Commonwealth. I honestly- This is about two things that is happening right now in our community. Number 1 is this CUC (Commonwealth Utilities Corporation) problem, and we have seen the numbers. The CUC Board has approved a scenario that intends a 5-year plan to raise utility rates and transition Government accounts to pay the same rates as commercial customers. They argue that this is the most balanced path forward. But let me speak clearly, I cannot stand in support of a decision that raises household costs while our families are already struggling to meet the basic needs. Today, the average residential bill is already \$184 per month for electricity, water, and wastewater. Under this plan, by Fiscal Year 2026, it will raise to \$218 per month. Even customers who only use electric and water will see their bill jump to \$185. And this is without guarantee of better service, fewer blackouts, and water you can actually drink from the sink. But for many of us, the extra \$30 or \$40 a month may not seem like a lot of money. To those in here and especially the decision makers up at the board. But to a mother raising 3 kids, a retiree on a fixed income, or a young worker trying to save for the future, that is groceries, fuel, and medicine. Yes, we understand CUC is struggling. We know the cost of fuel, aging infrastructure, and years of underinvestment have created a crisis that cannot be ignored. We do not expect any miracles from CUC. We expect transparency, accountability, and real leadership that puts people before profit. But Scenario 3 shifts the weight back to the ordinary citizens while failing to ask enough of the systems and institutions that got us here. Why are we being asked to carry the cost of decades of mismanagement? Why? Where is the audit? Where is the promise that this increase will lead to real visible improvement not just in balance sheets but in our daily lives? But I offer 3 principles that must guide any decisions about rate increases. Number 1, affordability is not optional. Any plan must include protection for low-income families, elderly residents, and those living paycheck to paycheck. Government reform must come first. Before raising residential rates, let us look at energy waste in government buildings, unpaid balances, and the lack of renewable infrastructure investment. Most importantly, the salaries of top management and the benefits that allow certain positions to take home on a monthly basis. That is ridiculous. And public trust must be earned. This means more than one-way decisions. It means open town halls, community-based input, and citizen oversight on the board to hold CUC accountable moving forward. I urge the CUC's Board and our elected leaders to remember this, we are not just ratepayers. We are your neighbors, your constituents, your community. We are not just rate payers, but we are parents, workers, elders, and business owners, and youth who make up the heart of our island. We are committed to being part of the solution. But we cannot remain silent when the solution comes at the expense of our family's

dignity and financial security. Let us find a better way, one that lifts us all, not just the ledgers. May I continue, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Yes.

Floor Leader Marissa Renee Flores: And finally, the repeat of repeat of all the things we can talk about the lack of whistleblower protections. Just last week, my office received 4 individuals that were hired in this government that have raised issues with grievances at OPM (Office of Personnel Management) with their leaders and their directors and their management. And until now, that is more than 2 months in 0 resolution to our public workers. So, I would like to talk a little bit about public leadership. In government, we are entrusted with more than just authority. We are entrusted with responsibility. The responsibility to serve the public with integrity and to lead those who committed their lives to that same service. Today, I just want to state plainly about the truth that we all must confront. Real leadership in government does not mean protecting ourselves. It means protecting our people. Leadership is not measured by how we defend our positions, but how we boldly defend our employees. Too often in public we see a pattern where when something goes wrong, those at the top retreat insulating themselves from accountability while those on the ground are left exposed. That is not leadership. That is self-preservation. When we lead a department, an agency or an office, we inherit not just the power of that position. We inherit the duty and uplift the public servants who do the work behind the scenes, often without recognition and always, always under pressure. We cannot call ourselves public servants if we only serve ourselves. Our employees from the front desk clerks to field inspectors, teachers, police officers, nurses, and sanitation workers are the engine of this government. They are the face of every policy we write and every promise we make. When they are mistreated, overburdened, or left vulnerable, we fail. Not just them. We fail the public we are sworn to serve. So, what does that mean to lead with integrity in the government? It means taking responsibility when mistakes happen, even when it is uncomfortable. Creating environments where staff feel safe to speak without fear. Fighting for fair wages, safe working conditions and support system, not only when it is popular, but most especially when it is not. And ensuring that we do not use civil service as scapegoats for political convenience. If we want to restore trust in our government, if we want to build agencies that people believe in, we must start with inside our own walls. We must protect our people with the same passion we use to protect our policies. Because leadership is not about survival, it is about service. It is not about status, it is about stewardship. So, let us commit to a better kind of leadership. One rooted with courage and care. A leadership where no employee feels disposable. Where no civil servant feels like their voice does not matter. Where those in power use it to shield, not silence. Let us be the kind of leaders who do not ask, "How can I protect my position?" Let us ask, "How can I protect my people?" Because at the end of the day, if we are not doing that, we are not leading at all and we cannot call ourselves leaders. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I yield.

*There being no further discussion on the floor, the Chair moved down to Item No. 18, Announcements, and recognized Representative Joel Castro Camacho.*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Representative Joel Castro Camacho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to inform the members of JGO (Judicial and Governmental Operations) Committee that I will be calling a

committee meeting next week. The agenda is going to be packed. So, get ready for a marathon, but there will be food. Thank you.

*The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.*

Floor Leader Marissa Renee Flores: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to make a small announcement because there are several of my constituents that called my office this morning that at CUC, they are not being encouraged anymore to dispute any of their bills. But there is no way, and nowhere in the law does it say that you are to withhold a ratepayer from disputing their bill. So, for the record, if anyone at CUC is watching, from the clerk to the back, if an individual ratepayer family comes in to dispute their bill, you must hand them a dispute resolution form. It does not carry over, and you cannot change the rules in the middle of the game. So, please, if any CUC or any of the ratepayers are experiencing an injustice such as that, feel free to call my office. I would like to get the running data on all those complaints, because that is an injustice in itself. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*There being no further announcements presented, the Chair moved down to adjournment and recognized the Floor Leader.*

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Floor Leader Marissa Renee Flores: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hereby move to adjourn subject to the call of the Chair. So move.

*The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussions on the floor, the motion for adjournment was carried by voice vote. There was no "nay" vote.*

*The House adjourned at 5:50 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,



Brenalyn T. Santos  
House Journal Clerk

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## **APPEARANCE OF LOCAL BILLS**

**FIRST LEGISLATIVE DAY:** 1st Legislative appearance of a local bill is on the day it is introduced.

**SECOND LEGISLATIVE DAY:**

H. L.B. NO. 24-17: To amend 10 CMC § 12114 to provide for the compensation of the members of the Rota Casino Commission. Introduced by REP. JULIE M. A. OGO of Rota, Precinct 7 (for herself) on June 20, 2025.

**THIRD LEGISLATIVE DAY:**

H. L. B. NO. 24-14: To impose a 0.5% ad valorem local excise surtax for the privilege of importing construction materials from outside and within the Commonwealth by licensed construction contractors into the First Senatorial District. Introduced by REP. JULIE M. A. OGO of Rota, Precinct 7 (for herself) on June 11, 2025.

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***Appearance of Measures introduced on the House Floor during the House Session on June 20, 2025:***

[Added-6/20/2025] H. B. NO. 24-32: To establish a tax on transient accommodations and to regulate the operation of short-term rentals in the Commonwealth; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. ROY C. A. ADA of Saipan, Precinct 1 and REP. JULIE M. A. OGO of Rota, Precinct 7 (for themselves, Representatives Daniel I. Aquino Jr., and Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao) on June 20, 2025; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

[Added-6/20/2025] H. B. NO. 24-33: To statutorily define the scope of the Commonwealth’s annual General Revenues within the meaning of Article XV, Section 1(e) of the NMI Constitution. Introduced by REP. RALPH N. YUMUL on behalf of REP. ROMAN C. BENAVENTE of Saipan, Precinct 1 (for himself, Representatives Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Angelo A. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Thomas J. DIC. Manglona, Julie M. A. Ogo, John Paul P. Sablan, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on June 20, 2025; referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means and to the House Committee on Education on June 24, 2025 (Memo).

[Added-6/20/2025] H. L. B. NO. 24-17: To amend 10 CMC § 12114 to provide for the compensation of the members of the Rota Casino Commission. Introduced by REP. JULIE M. A. OGO of Rota, Precinct 7 (for herself) on June 20, 2025.

H. RES. NO. 24-9: To celebrate the 10th Anniversary of Latte Built 24hr Fitness and to recognize Derek Cutting’s outstanding contributions to the health and well-being of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands community, while also acknowledging the positive impact of local businesses on our island’s growth and resilience. Introduced by REP. THOMAS J. DIC. MANGLONA of Saipan, Precinct 5 (for himself, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada, Vincent R. Aldan, Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Julie M. A. Ogo, Malcolm J. Omar, Raymond U. Palacios, Elias J.M. Rangamar, John Paul P. Sablan, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, Marissa R. Flores, Edmund S. Villagomez, and Ralph N. Yumul) on June 20, 2025; subsequently placed on the Resolution Calendar.

H. RES. NO. 24-10: To recognize the outstanding managerial and leadership contributions of Gloria Cavanagh in her services to the hospitality and business industry in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Introduced by REP. JULIE M. A. OGO of Rota, Precinct (for herself, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada, Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Angelo A. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Thomas J. DIC. Manglona, Malcolm J. Omar, Raymond U. Palacios, Elias J.M. Rangamar, John Paul P. Sablan, Patrick H. San Nicolas, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on June 20, 2025; subsequently placed on the Resolution Calendar.

[Added-6/20/2025] C. Res. No. 24-4: To commemorate the life, legacy, and dedicated service of the late Dr. John Lamphear Doyle III, for his exceptional contributions to medicine and his profound impact on the well-being of the people of the CNMI, and to extend sincere condolences to his bereaved family. Introduced by Rep. Malcolm J. Omar of Saipan, Precinct 4 (for himself, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada, Vincent R. Aldan, Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Thomas J. DIC. Manglona, Julie M. A. Ogo, Raymond U. Palacios, Elias J.M. Rangamar, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on June 20, 2025; subsequently placed on the Resolution Calendar.

Miscellaneous Speech for Monday

1. CUC -

Thank you, Speaker and Colleagues, for allowing me this time to speak with our community during this section of the agenda.

We've all seen the numbers. The CUC Board has approved Scenario 3, a phased five-year plan to raise utility rates, and transition government accounts to pay the same rates as commercial customers. They argue this is the most "balanced" path forward

But let me speak clearly: I cannot stand in support of a decision that raises household costs while our families are already struggling to meet basic needs.

Let's talk about reality.

Today, the average residential bill is already \$184 per month for electricity, water, and wastewater. Under this plan, by FY 2026, it will rise to \$218 per month. Even customers who only use electric and water will see their bills jump to \$185 — and this, without any guarantee of better service, fewer blackouts, or water you can ~~always trust to~~ drink.

For many of <sup>us</sup> you, that extra \$30 to \$40 a month may not seem like a lot to some decision-makers. But to a mother raising three kids, a retiree on fixed income, or a young worker trying to save for the future — that's groceries, fuel, or medicine.

Yes, we understand CUC is struggling.

We know the cost of fuel, aging infrastructure, and years of underinvestment have created a crisis that can't be ignored. We don't expect miracles from CUC. We expect transparency, accountability, and real leadership that puts people before profit.

But Scenario 3 shifts the weight to the backs of ordinary citizens, while failing to ask enough of the systems and institutions that got us here.

Why are we being asked to carry the cost of decades of mismanagement?

Where is the audit? Where is the promise that this increase will lead to real, visible improvement — not just in balance sheets, but in our daily lives?

I offer three principles that must guide any decision about rate increases:

Affordability is not optional.

Any plan must include protections for low-income families, elderly residents, and those living paycheck to paycheck.

Government reform must come first.

Before raising residential rates, let's look at energy waste in government buildings, unpaid balances, and the lack of renewable infrastructure investment. Most importantly, the salaries of top management and the benefits such as gas allowances for certain positions! This is what the FAC pays for! This is what we pay for!

Public trust must be earned.

This means more than one-way decisions. It means open town halls, community-based input, and a citizens' oversight board to hold CUC accountable moving forward.

I urge the CUC Board and our elected leaders to remember this: We are not just ratepayers — we are your neighbors, your constituents, your community. WE are not just ratepayers, but parents, workers, elders, business owners and youth who make up the heart of our islands.

"We are committed to being part of the solution — but we cannot remain silent when that solution comes at the expense of our families' dignity and financial security. ~~The burden of funding six-figure executive salaries and benefits should not fall on the backs of hardworking ratepayers.~~"

Let's find a better way — one that lifts us all, not just the ledgers.

2



2. Public Leadership –

In government, we are entrusted with more than authority. We are entrusted with responsibility — the responsibility to serve the public with integrity, and to lead those who have committed their lives to that same service.

Today, I want to speak plainly about a truth we must all confront:

**Real leadership in government doesn't mean protecting ourselves. It means protecting our people.**

**Leadership isn't measured by how well we defend our positions — but by how boldly we defend our employees.**

Too often in the public sector, we see a pattern where, when something goes wrong, those at the top retreat — insulating themselves from accountability while those on the ground are left exposed. That is not leadership. That is self-preservation.

When we lead a department, an agency, or an office, we inherit not just the power of that position — we inherit the duty to protect and uplift the public servants who do the work behind the scenes, often without recognition, and always under pressure.

**We cannot call ourselves public servants if we only serve ourselves.**

Our employees — from front desk clerks to field inspectors, teachers, police officers, nurses, and sanitation workers — are the engine of this government. They are the face of every policy we write and every promise we make. When they are mistreated, overburdened, or left vulnerable, **we fail not just them — we fail the public we are sworn to serve.**



Q **So what does it mean to lead with integrity in government?**

It means:

- Taking responsibility when mistakes happen — even when it's uncomfortable.
- Creating environments where staff feel safe to speak up without fear.
- Fighting for fair wages, safe working conditions, and support systems — not only when it's popular, but especially when it's not.
- Ensuring that we do not use civil servants as scapegoats for political convenience.

Q **The public will judge us by how we treat our own.**

If we want to restore trust in government — if we want to build agencies that people believe in — we must start inside our own walls. We must protect our people with the same passion we use to protect our policies.

Because leadership isn't about survival. It's about service.

It's not about status. It's about stewardship.

Q **Let us commit to a better kind of leadership — one rooted in courage and care.**

A leadership where no employee feels disposable.

Where no civil servant feels like their voice doesn't matter.

Where those in power use it to **shield, not silence.**

Let us be the kind of leaders who don't ask, *"How can I protect my position?"*

Let us ask, *"How can I protect my people?"*

Because at the end of the day, if we're not doing that — we're not leading at all.

**Thank you.**

