



HOUSE JOURNAL

SECOND REGULAR SESSION, 2025

1st Day, Second Regular Session

Friday, August 15, 2025

The House of Representatives of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature convened its First Day, Second Regular Session on Friday, August 15, 2025, at 10:06 a.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.	Present
Representative Blas Jonathan "BJ" Tenorio Attao	Absent (Excused)
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	Present
Representative Raymond Ulloa Palacios	Present
Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar	Present
Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan	Present
Representative Patrick Hofschneider San Nicolas	Absent (Excused)
Representative Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez	Present
Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai	Absent (Excused)
Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul	Present

Clerk Linda B. Muna: Mr. Speaker, 17 members are present and 3 members are absent.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With 17 members present, a quorum is duly established. Let the record reflect that Representatives Blas Jonathan Attao, Patrick San Nicolas, and Denita Yangetmai are excused for today's session. Before we go down to Item

No. 2, Public Comments, I recognize the Floor Leader for the suspension of rules to amend today's agenda.

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved for the suspension of Rule III, Section 6.

RULE III. SESSIONS AND MEETINGS

Section 6. Notice of Sessions.

Not less than 72 hours prior to convening a Regular or Special Session, the Speaker or a majority of the members of the House, shall file a written public notice of the date, time, and place of a session with the Clerk and post the same at the executive branch administration building and the Legislature's website. When possible, notices under this section shall be given to at least one newspaper of general circulation. Notices shall contain an agenda of items to be considered at the session. Final disposition shall not be taken on any other matter at such session. Once filed as part of this notice, the agenda may only be changed by adding items thereto by the recorded vote of the majority of the members of the House.

The motion was seconded, and 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 to suspend Rule III, Section 6 with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	Yes
Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan	Yes
Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino Jr.	Yes
Representative Blas Jonathan "BJ" Tenorio Attao	Absent (Excused)
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	Yes
Representative Raymond Ulloa Palacios	Yes
Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar	Yes
Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan	Yes
Representative Patrick Hofschneider San Nicolas	Absent (Excused)
Representative Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez	Yes
Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai	Absent (Excused)
Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul	Yes

Clerk Linda B. Muna: Mr. Speaker, all 17 members present voted "yes."

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 17 members present voting “yes,” the motion carries. We will now proceed to Item No. 2, Public Comments. The podium is open to receive any 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 three individuals on the following items:

H. B. NO. 24-46: To Define and Identify General Revenues and approve revenues and resources of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands as identified pursuant to Article III, Section 9 (a) of the CNMI Constitution, as amended, and 1 CMC Division 7, for Fiscal Year 2026 and make appropriations for the operations and activities of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, its agencies, instrumentalities, and independent programs, and to provide budget authority for government corporations for Fiscal Year 2026; and for other purposes.

H. B. NO. 24-32: A Bill for an Act To repeal and reenact the Justice Center Fund Revolving Account.

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

ADOPTION OF JOURNALS

The Clerk announced the following House Journals:

First Day, Fourth Special Session Journal – July 14, 2025

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved for the adoption of First Day, Fourth Special Session Journal – July 14, 2025. The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to adopt First Day, Fourth Special Session Journal – July 14, 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 Julie Marie Atalig Ogo under House Bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

House Bills:

Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo formally introduced the following bill, which was then referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means:

H. B. NO. 24-45 To re-appropriate Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000.00) under Public Law No. 21-10, Section 2(G), for operational expenses of the Office of the Mayor of the Municipality of Rota. **Prefiled by: REP. JULIE M. A. OGO** of Rota, Precinct 7 (for herself)

Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan formally introduced the following bill; subsequently requested the Chair to place on the Bill Calendar:

H. B. NO. 24-46: To Define and Identify General Revenues and approve revenues and resources of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands as identified pursuant to Article III, Section 9 (a) of the CNMI Constitution, as amended, and 1 CMC Division 7, for Fiscal Year 2026 and make appropriations for the operations and activities of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, its agencies, instrumentalities, and independent programs, and to provide budget authority for government corporations for Fiscal Year 2026; and for other purposes. **Prefiled by: REP. JOHN PAUL P. SABLÁN** of Saipan, Precinct 2 (for himself, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada, Vincent R. Aldan, Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Thomas J. DiC. Manglona, Malcolm J. Omar, Raymond U. Palacios, Elias J.M. Rangamar, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul)

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader to place H. B. No. 24-46 on the Resolution Calendar.

The Floor Leader moved to suspend Rule IX, Section 8.

RULE IX. BILLS, RESOLUTIONS, AND AMENDMENTS.

Section 8. Referral of Bills and Resolutions.

(a) Bills and resolutions shall be read by title upon introduction, and (except as provided in subsection (b), the Speaker shall refer such measures to an appropriate committee or to more than one committee, jointly or sequentially. The Clerk shall endorse such reference on the measure before duplication and shall enter such reference upon the journal. In the case of error of reference, correction may be made by the House, with debate, immediately after the reading and approval of the Journal, by unanimous consent, or upon motion of either committee claiming jurisdiction or the committee to which the measure has been erroneously referred.

(b) The Speaker may place a resolution directly on the Resolution Calendar, rather than refer it to a committee, subject to appeal to the House.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to suspend Rule IX, Section 8 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair recognized Vice Speaker Diego Vincent Fejeran Camacho.

Vice Speaker Diego Vincent Fejeran Camacho formally introduced the following bill, which was then referred to the House Committee on Judicial and Governmental Operations:

H. B. NO. 24-47: To realign the authority and duties of the CNMI Department of Labor; and for the other purposes. **Prefiled by: REP. DIEGO V. F. CAMACHO** of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Representatives Marissa R. Flores, and Edmund S. Villagomez)

Representative Angelo Atalig Camacho formally introduced the following bill, which was then referred to the House Committees on Judicial and Governmental Operations, and Ways and Means:

H. B. NO. 24-48: To adjust the 1992 salary cap of executive directors to a 2025 inflation-equivalent amount. **Prefiled by: REP. ANGELO A. CAMACHO** of Saipan, Precinct 5 (*for himself*)

Representative Malcolm Jason Omar formally introduced the following bill, which was then referred to the House Committee on Judicial and Governmental Operations:

H. B. NO. 24-49: To establish the CNMI Next/Gen 911 Telephone Communications System within the CNMI; and for other purposes. **Prefiled by: REP. MALCOLM J. OMAR** of Saipan, Precinct 4 (*for himself*)

Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan formally introduced the following bill, which was then referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means:

H. B. NO. 24-50: To authorize a loan between the Commonwealth Government and the Marianas Public Land Trust in the amount of \$29,000,000 and authorize the Marianas Public Land Trust to withhold and retain net annual distributable income starting Fiscal Year 2026 for repayment and security of the loan. **Prefile by: REP. JOHN PAUL P. SABLAN** of Saipan, Precinct 2 (*for himself*)

By this time, the Chair opened the floor for introductions of unnumbered bills and recognized Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan.

Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan formally introduced the following bill, the Chair subsequently referred the bill to the House Committee on Ways and Means:

[ADDED-8/15/2025] H. B. NO. 24-51: To establish revolving accounts for the Department of Lands & Natural Resources; and for other purposes. Introduced by **REP. JOHN PAUL P. SABLAN** of Saipan, Precinct 2 (*for himself*) on August 15, 2025. Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means on August 18, 2025.

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Marissa Renee Flores formally introduced the following bill; the Chair subsequently referred the bill to the House Committee on Judicial and Governmental Operations:

[ADDED-8/15/2025] H. B. NO. 24-52: An Act to strengthen current domestic and family violence laws to ensure the protections of women and children and to recognize and penalize digital and electronic harassment as acts of domestic and family violence; and for other purposes. Introduced by **REP. MARISSA R. FLORES** of Saipan, Precinct 3 (*for herself*, Representative Julie M.A. Ogo) on August 15, 2025. Referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations on August 18, 2025.

There being no further introduction of house bills on the floor, the Chair moved down to House Local Bills.

House Local Bills:

The Chair opened the floor for introduction. There being no introduction made on the floor and no item under House Legislative Initiatives, the Chair moved down to Introduction of Resolutions.

House Legislative Initiatives:

None

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

House Resolutions:

The floor was opened for introduction of house resolutions, and there being no introduction on the floor, the Chair moved down to House Joint Resolutions and recognized Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan.

House Joint Resolutions:

Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan formally introduced the following resolution:

[ADDED-8/15/2025] H. J. R. NO. 24-7: To encourage the Honorable David M. Apatang, Governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, to declare a Proactive Resilience Emergency Declaration to protect the Commonwealth's renewable energy future in light of the approaching federal deadline under the 2025 "Big Beautiful Budget" Act (BBB); and urging all agencies to fast-track renewable energy projects before the opportunity expires. Introduced by **REP. VINCENT R. ALDAN** of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Representatives Roman C. Benavente, Joel

C. Camacho, and Elias J.M. Rangamar; Roy C.A. Ada, Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Angelo A. Camacho, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Thomas J. DIC. Manglona, Julie M. A. Ogo, Malcolm J. Omar, Raymond U. Palacios, John Paul P. Sablan, Edmund S. Villagomez and Ralph N. Yumul) on August 15, 2025 and subsequently placed on the Resolution Calendar.

With no objection from the author, the resolution was introduced by the Committee of the whole House.

House Commemorative Resolutions:

None

House Concurrent Resolutions:

None

There being no further introductions of resolutions on the floor, the Chair moved down to Item No. 6, Messages from the Governor, and recognized the Clerk.

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Clerk announced the following Messages from the Governor:

GOV. COMM. 24-42: (7/29/2025) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. L. B. No. 24-5, D1, (To amend the Saipan Zoning Law to define “Automobile Sales & Service”). Became Saipan Local Law 24-06 [For info]

GOV. COMM. 24-43: (7/29/2025) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. L. B. No. 24-19, D1, (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.). Became Saipan Local Law 24-07 [For info]

GOV. COMM. 24-44: (8/4/2025) Certifying and granting approval for Ms. Molly Kay Dennert, Assistant Public Defender, at the Office of the Public Defender to receive an annual salary of \$70,000. [For info]

GOV. COMM. 24-45: (8/5/2025) Certifying and granting approval for Mr. Drew Garrett Engel, Assistant Attorney General, at the Office of the Attorney General to receive an annual salary of \$80,000. [For info]

GOV. COMM. 24-46: (8/5/2025) Informing the House that he signed into law, 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.). Became Saipan Local Law 24-08 [For info]

GOV. COMM. 24-47: (8/5/2025) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. B. No. 24-1, HS1, (To amend provisions in Title 6, Division 1, Part 1, Chapter 3, Sexual Offenses, Article 1. General Provisions, relating to sexual abuse/assault of minors.). Became Public Law No. 24-08. [For info]

GOV. COMM. 24-48: (8/5/2025) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. B. No. 24-2, (To establish a process for the delivery of a State of the Commonwealth Address to the Legislature by the Governor.). Became Public Law No. 24-09. [For info]

GOV. COMM. 24-49: (8/5/2025) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. B. No. 24-19, (To rename the “CNMI Scholarship Office” to the “CNMI Scholarship and Financial Assistance Office.”). Became Public Law No. 24-10. [For info]

GOV. COMM. 24-50: (8/8/2025) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. L. B. No. 24-15, (To appropriate revenues collected for the Third Senatorial District pursuant to Public Law 20- 59.). Became Saipan Local Law 24-09 [For info]

[ADDED-8/15/2025] GOV. COMM. 24-51: (8/12/2025) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. B. No. 24-29, SD1, (*To reconcile public utility accounts between CHCC and CUC by waiving intra-governmental penalties and preserving enforceable debt obligations; and for other purposes.*). Became **Public Law No. 24-11.** [For info]

[ADDED-8/15/2025] GOV. COMM. 24-52: (8/11/2025) Informing the House that he signed into law, H. L. B. No. 24-21, S1 (*To appropriate \$2,000,000.00 of dividends collected by the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority (CEDA) from the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) to assist the Department of Finance and the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority with the funding related to the Third Senatorial District.*). Became **Saipan Local Law 24-10** [For info]

The Chair opened the floor for discussion, and recognized Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan.

Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to express my gratitude to Governor Apatang for Governor’s Communication No. 24-42: Informing the House that he signed into law, H. L. B. No. 24-5, D1, (To amend the Saipan Zoning Law to define “Automobile Sales & Service.”). Which became Saipan Local Law 24-06. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Marissa Renee Flores: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Governor Apatang in regard to Governor’s Communication 24-47: Informing the House that he signed into law H. B. No. 24-1, HS1, To amend provisions in Title 6, Division

1, Part 1, Chapter 3, Sexual Offenses, Article 1. General Provisions, relating to sexual abuse/assault of minors. Which is now Public Law No. 24-08. And also, Governor's Communication No. 24-49: Informing the House that he signed into law, H. L. B. No. 24-19, To rename the "CNMI Scholarship Office" to the "CNMI Scholarship and Financial Assistance Office". Which became Public Law 24-10.

There being no further discussion on the floor, 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. 24-43: (7/31/2025) Returning H. J. R. 24-4, entitled, "To authorize the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, through its Governor, to submit to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development the Action Plan for the Community Development Block Grant Application No. B-25-ST69-0001, the Home Investment Partnership Grant Application No. M-25-ST69-0203, the National Housing Trust Fund Grant Application No. F-25-ST69-0203, and the Emergency Solutions Grant Application No. E-25-DC69-0001; to receive the funds requested therein; and to assume all responsibilities that may be imposed pursuant to those grants.", which was adopted by the Senate without amendments on July 31, 2025. [For info]

SEN. COMM. 24-44: (7/31/2025) Returning H. J. R. 24-5, entitled, "To recognize and acknowledge the National Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) and the Guam-CNMI ESGR State Committee and their volunteer members for their exceptional service and commitment to our service men and women and to thank and appreciate our civilian employers for their utmost support to our service members by recognizing the week of August 4th through August 8th, 2025 as "Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Week".", which was adopted by the Senate without amendments on July 31, 2025. [For info]

SEN. COMM. 24-45: (7/31/2025) Returning H. J. R. 24-6, entitled, "Commending the distinguished life and extraordinary contributions of the late Honorable Governor Arnold Indalecio Palacios to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and its people and to acknowledge his enduring legacy as a genuine statesman.", which was adopted by the Senate without amendments on July 31, 2025. [For info]

SEN. COMM. 24-46: (7/31/2025) Informing the House that the Senate of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature has concluded its Re-organizational Session on July 31, 2025, and is now organized to conduct legislative business. Officers of the 24th Senate:

- President: Senator Karl R. King-Nabors

- Vice President: Senator Corina L. Magofna
- Floor Leader: Senator Donald M. Manglona
- Legislative Secretary: Senator Francisco Q. Cruz [For info]

SEN. COMM. 24-47: (7/31/2025) Transmitting a certified copy of Senate Resolution No. 24-07, entitled, “To honor the service of Chief Boatswain’s Mate Richard Hofschneider upon his retirement from the United States Coast Guard and to commend his exceptional service, leadership, and dedication to serving and protecting our nation.”. [For info]

SEN. COMM. 24-48: (8/8/2025) Transmitting a certified copy of Senate Resolution No. 24-08, entitled, “To recognize and commend Pamela Yvette M. Sablan for her exceptional contributions and unwavering dedication to conservation practices to support the agricultural community in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.”. [For info]

[ADDED-8/15/2025] SEN. COMM. 24-49: (8/14/2025) Returning H. C. R. NO. 24-2, entitled, “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.”, which was passed by the Senate with amendments on August 13, 2025 in the form of *H. C. R. No. 24-2, SD1* to read: “*To approve revenues and resources of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, as identified under Article III, Section 9(a) of the Constitution, as amended, and Title 1, Division 7, of the Commonwealth Code, for Fiscal Year 2026, beginning October 1, 2025, and ending on September 30, 2026.*”. February 14, 2025. [**For action on Senate amendments**] – Placed on the Resolution Calendar on August 15, 2025.

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved to accept Senate Communication No. 24-43 through 24-49.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to accept Senate Communications No. 24-43 through 24-49 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

Pursuant to the action taken, Senate Communication No. 24-49, referencing, “Returning H. C. R. NO. 24-2, entitled, “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.”, which was passed by the Senate with amendments on August 13, 2025 in the form of H. C. R. No. 24-2, SD1 to read: “To approve revenues and resources of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, as identified under Article III, Section 9(a) of the Constitution, as amended, and Title 1, Division 7, of the

Commonwealth Code, for Fiscal Year 2026, beginning October 1, 2025, and ending on September 30, 2026.””, was placed on the Resolution Calendar.

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

HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk announced the following House Communications:

HSE. COMM. 24-46: (7/28/2025) From Representative Denita K. Yangetmai informing the Speaker that she will be out of the Commonwealth on official business from August 1-August 7, 2025; and from August 8-August 22, 2025 she will be on personal leave, and requests to be excused from all official functions during her absence. [For info]

HSE. COMM. 24-47: (7/29/2025) From Representative Marissa R. Flores, informing the Chair of the House Standing Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of her resignation as Vice Chair, effective August 1, 2025. [For info]

HSE. COMM. 24-48: (8/7/2025) From Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao informing the Speaker of his absence from the Commonwealth for personal matters from August 11, 2025, and requesting to be excused from all official meetings and sessions during this period. Additionally, he authorizes the Speaker or Representative Ralph N. Yumul to formally introduce his bills on his behalf. [For info]

[ADDED-8/15/2025] HSE. COMM. 24-49: (8/12/2025) From Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas informing the Speaker that he will be out of the Commonwealth on official business from August 14-August 18, 2025; and requests to be excused from legislative sessions, and committee meetings during his absence. [For info]

The floor was opened for discussion, and there was none. There being no discussion on the floor, the Chair moved down to Item No. 9, Communications from the Judicial Branch, and recognized the Clerk.

The Chair opened the floor for discussion, and there being no discussion on the floor, the Chair moved down to Item No. 9, Communications from the Judicial Branch, and recognized the Clerk.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

The Clerk announced the following Communications from the Judicial Branch:

JUD. BR. COMM. 24-4: (7/29/2025) From Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro to the Senate President and Speaker of the House submitting: Proposed NMI Rules of Judicial Disciplinary Procedure. [Submitted 7/29/2025; Deadline: 9/27/2025]

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

Pursuant to the action taken, Jud. Br. Comm. 24-4, referencing, "From Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro to Senate President and Speaker of the House submitting: Proposal NMI Rules of Judicial Disciplinary Procedure.", was referred to the House Committee on Judicial and Governmental Branch.

The Chair moved down to Item No. 10, Communications from the Departments & Agencies, and recognized the Clerk.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENTS & AGENCIES

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

DEPT./AGCY. COMM. 24-14: (7/31/2025) From the Secretary, Department of Finance (DOF) submitting FY 2025—Third Quarter Financial Report ending June 30, 2025. [For info]

DEPT./AGCY. COMM. 24-15: (8/6/2025) From the Secretary of the Department of Commerce, conveying concerns regarding statutory and regulatory inconsistencies between Public Law 18-69 and existing dormant account regulations under Title 20-20.4, which may limit the public's ability to reclaim funds. Recommends clarifying claim timelines, updating regulations, and ensuring accurate public notices. [For info]

The Chair opened the floor for discussion, and recognized Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul.

Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Dept./Agcy. Communication No. 24-14, I would like to request the Chairman of Ways and Means, or Chairman of SNILD (Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation) to request from the Secretary's Office the update on the construction tax. Because on the report that was submitted, it is still marked as 0. So, we are not too sure on what is going on with the collections. Thank you.

Pursuant to the action taken, Dept./Agcy. Comm. 24-14, referencing, "From the Secretary, Department of Finance (DOF) submitting FY 2025—Third Quarter Financial Report ending June 30, 2025.", was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means; and Dept./Agcy. Comm. 24-15, referencing, "From the Secretary of the Department of Commerce, conveying concerns regarding statutory and regulatory inconsistencies between Public Law 18-69 and existing dormant account regulations under Title 20-20.4, which may limit the public's ability to reclaim

funds. Recommends clarifying claim timelines, updating regulations, and ensuring accurate public notices.”, was referred to the House Committee on Commerce.

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. 24-48: (8/1/2025) From Our Common Wealth 670, a community-based advocacy organization, submitting public comments on the 2025 Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the CNMI Joint Military Training (CJMT). [For info]

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

Pursuant to the action taken, Misc. Comm. 24-48, referencing, “From Our Common Wealth 670, a community-based advocacy organization, submitting public comments on the 2025 Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the CNMI Joint Military Training (CJMT).”, was referred to the House Committee on Federal and Foreign Affairs.

There being no items listed under Item No. 12, Reports of Standing Committees; 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.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

None

REPORTS OF SPECIAL AND CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

RESOLUTION CALENDAR

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: We have two items on the calendar, House Joint Resolution No. 24-7 and House Concurrent Resolution No. 24-2, SS1, but they will be acted on in the next session. We now move down to Item No. 16, Bill Calendar, and I recognize the Floor Leader.

BILL CALENDAR

The Chair called for recess.

The House recessed at 10:36 a.m.

Recess

The House reconvened at 10:37 a.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Before we went on recess, we just entered Item No. 16, Bill Calendar, on the agenda. And with that, I recognize the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved to suspend Rule VII, Section 9, and Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to suspend Rule VII, Section 9, and Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved for the passage of First and Final Reading of H. B. No. 24-32:

H. B. NO. 24-32: A Bill for an Act To establish a tax on transient accommodations and to regulate the operation of short-term rentals in the Commonwealth; and for other purposes.

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

The Chair called for recess.

The House recessed at 10:38 a.m.

Recess

The House reconvened at 10:39 a.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Before we went on recess, we were entertaining the motion for the passage of House Bill No. 24-32. Before I call for the vote, any discussions?

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. 24-32, First and Final Reading, with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	Yes
Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan	Yes
Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino Jr.	Yes
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao	Absent (Excused)
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	Yes
Representative Raymond Ulloa Palacios	Yes
Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar	Yes
Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan	Yes
Representative Patrick Hofschneider San Nicolas	Absent (Excused)
Representative Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez	Yes
Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai	Absent (Excused)
Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul	Yes

Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, all 17 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 17 members present voting “yes,” House Bill No. 24-32 hereby passes the House. I recognize the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved to suspend Rule VII, Section 9, and Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to suspend Rule VII, Section 9, and Rule IX, Sections 9 and 10 was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

The Floor Leader moved for the passage of the First and Final Reading of H. B. No. 24-46:

H. B. NO. 24-46: To Define and Identify General Revenues and approve revenues and resources of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands as identified pursuant to Article III, Section 9 (a) of the CNMI Constitution, as amended, and 1 CMC Division 7, for Fiscal Year 2026 and make appropriations for the operations and activities of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, its agencies, instrumentalities, and independent programs, and to provide

budget authority for government corporations for Fiscal Year 2026; and for other purposes.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion and recognized Representative Angelo Atalig Camacho.

Representative Angelo Atalig Camacho: Privilege, Mr. Speaker? Can we call for a short recess to this bill?

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Okay. I recognize your privilege, and I will acknowledge that short recess.

The House recessed at 10:41 a.m.

Recess

The House reconvened at 10:59 a.m.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Before we went under recess, we were under the bill calendar on House Bill No. 24-46. We also suspended Rule 7, Section 9, and Rule 9, Sections 9 and 10, which we did adopt the motion for passage. And I would like to ask the Floor Leader to reinstate that motion.

The Floor Leader moved for the passage of the First and Final Reading of H. B. No. 24-46:

H. B. NO. 24-46:To Define and Identify General Revenues and approve revenues and resources of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands as identified pursuant to Article III, Section 9 (a) of the CNMI Constitution, as amended, and 1 CMC Division 7, for Fiscal Year 2026 and make appropriations for the operations and activities of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, its agencies, instrumentalities, and independent programs, and to provide budget authority for government corporations for Fiscal Year 2026; and for other purposes.

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. I believe everyone has a floor amendment copy before you, and it is also on the screen. I would like to offer an amendment to House Bill No. 24-46. To amend the current text to reflect an amendment as follows. On page 16, line 11, Section 203, Suspension of Earmarked Funds. To read as follows, and to renumber all subsequent subsections accordingly. As you see, adding those figures and underlining, striking out “BMV Fund 9 CMC subsections 2118 and 2119,” and to also include a strike-through on the word “and” before the “Developers Infrastructure Tax.”

Section 203. Suspension of Earmarked Funds.

Except for debt service obligations and other earmarking of funds as permitted in Section 201 of this Chapter, the earmarking, reservation, commitment, allotment, or allocation of funds pursuant to the following public laws are hereby suspended for the Fiscal Year 2026:

a) Tobacco Control – Cigarette Tax, Public Law 13-38;;	<u>\$2,443,534</u>
b) CIQ Overtime Revolving Fund;;	<u>\$1,498,413</u>
c) BMV Fund, 9 CMC §2118, §2119 ;;	
cd) GHLI – 50% Cigarette 4 CMC §1402(g)(3) – PL 18-64;;	<u>\$4,072,557</u>
de) Cancer Fund – Cigarette Tax, 4 CMC § 1402(g)(2);;	<u>\$681,198</u>
ef) PSS Technical Education – 4 CMC § 1503(f);;	<u>\$67,546</u>
fg) MVA – Alcohol Container (20%), 4 CMC § 1803;;	<u>\$103,457</u>
gh) Foreign Worker Fee Fund, PL 17-01; 2 CMC §4968;;	
hi) NMIRF – Hotel Tax (20%), 4 CMC § 1803;;	<u>\$1,771,309</u>
ij) NMIRF – Alcohol Container (30%), 4 CMC § 1803;;	<u>\$155,186</u>
jk) NMIRF DB Plan Fund – 15% E-gaming, Public Law 18-30, 4 CMC § 1511 (a)	<u>\$288,847</u>
kl) NMIRF – 60% E-gaming, Public Law 18-30, 4 CMC § 1511 (b);; and	<u>\$1,155,387</u>
lm) Developers Infrastructure Tax (100%).	<u>\$232,590</u>

Provided further, notwithstanding any Commonwealth laws to the contrary, in the event that actual collections exceed the projected amounts as identified by the Department of Finance on April 1, 2025, any excess amount shall not be subject to suspension and shall be automatically transferred to the beneficiary entity without further legislative action.”

Also, on page 37, line 13 to 14. To amend Section 709, Other Programs.

Section 709. Other Programs.

“cost reductions have been exhausted. A minimum of ~~70%~~ 86% of all PSS funds must be allocated directly to instructional expenditures. Austerity measures shall not”

Consistent with the intent of the foregoing amendments, I hereby also move to allow the Legal counsel together with the House Clerk to make further non-substantive technical amendments that are strictly necessary to effectuate the intent of this floor amendment prior to transmittal. The legal sufficiency signature of House Legislative Counsel contained in the final, engrossed version of a bill shall reflect the signature of the counsel endorsing the last amendment, if any, addressed by the House.

The motion was seconded; the Chair opened the floor for discussion. There being no discussion on the floor, the motion to adopt the floor amendment was carried by voice vote. There was no “nay” vote.

The Chair moved to the motion for the passage of H. B. No. 24-46, HD1.

The Chair opened the floor for discussion, and recognized Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan.

Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan: Thank you, Mr. Speake, and colleagues. We gather today with the serious responsibility of passing a budget that will keep our government running and meet the needs of our people. It is not an easy job, but it is one we must do with care and with the understanding that every decision we make affects the lives of our families, neighbors, and friends. As we know, the Administration submitted its version of the Fiscal Year 2026 budget back

in April. That proposal remained unchanged, even as our economic situation did not get much better. We owe it to our people to respond to the challenges we face today, and that is what this House Budget Bill tries to do. In this budget, we made adjustments to free up \$29,000,000.00 from across the Commonwealth so that we can fulfill our obligation to our retirees. These men and women are those ones who built the foundations of our government, our schools, and our infrastructure. They gave decades of service believing their retirement would be there for them. We have a federal court settlement that requires us to fund 75% of our retirees' pensions. This is not optional—it is both a legal and moral duty. The Apatang Administration has shared plans to borrow \$29,000,000.00 from the Marianas Public Land Trust to help meet this obligation, but that loan is not yet in place. We cannot wait on something that is not certain. Until the MPLT loan becomes a reality, we need to pass a budget with the resources we have now. We did this by keeping agencies at their current Fiscal Year 2025 funding levels. No cuts, no increases—holding steady. We also looked at new and vacant positions that were not yet filled and did not fund them this year. That is how we were able to set aside the \$29 million without taking away from the essential services our people depend on. This was not easy. Every member of the Ways and Means Committee contributed their ideas and helped make the hard choices. We worked together and listened to each other, and what you see here is the result of bipartisan cooperation. I would like to think that the message we send to everyone that did not receive what the Administration had proposed back in April is “not yet.” But this is better than saying, “You will be getting even less.” In these times, being careful with our spending is not just a goal—it is something we must do. We have to live within our means while still meeting our most important obligations. I want to sincerely thank all the members of the Ways and Means Committee for their hard work and their willingness to make tough decisions. I also thank the staff of the Legislative Bureau for their tireless support during this process. I also want to thank the mayors and staff of the First, Second, and Third Senatorial Districts for welcoming us and supporting our budget hearings on their islands. To our government departments and agencies that participated in the hearings—thank you for your presence and your input. You play an important role in shaping the future of our Commonwealth. To my colleagues: thank you for your dedication and for working together to get us to this point. To our retirees: this is our pledge to you that we will honor our commitments. And to the people of the Commonwealth: this budget is built with fairness, responsibility, and respect for every dollar entrusted to us. Today, I humbly ask for your support. Let us pass a budget that not only balances the numbers but also keeps faith with our people. And at this time, if there are any questions, I stand ready to answer to the best of my knowledge. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 on the passage of H. B. No. 24-46, HD1, First and Final Reading, with the following results:

Representative Roy Christopher A. Ada	Yes
Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan	Yes
Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino Jr.	Yes
Representative Blas Jonathan “BJ” Tenorio Attao	Absent (Excused)
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	Yes
Representative Raymond Ulloa Palacios	Yes
Representative Elias Jerome Malite Rangamar	Yes
Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan	Yes
Representative Patrick Hofschneider San Nicolas	Absent (Excused)
Representative Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez	Yes
Representative Denita Kaipat Yangetmai	Absent (Excused)
Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul	Yes

Clerk Linda B. Muña: Mr. Speaker, all 17 members present voted “yes.”

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: Thank you, Clerk. With all 17 members present voting “yes,” House Bill No. 24-46, House Draft 1, hereby passes the House. Thank you, colleagues. With nothing further, under the bill calendar, as you see on the agenda, some concerns have been brought up. So, those bills will remain on the calendar for action in the next session. With that, we move down to Item No. 17, Miscellaneous Business, and I recognize Representative Malcolm Omar.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Representative Malcolm Jason Omar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the referral of my House Bill No. 24-49, I just want to submit to the Clerk and to the Chair of the Committee letters of support that I received since pre-filing. One from the Emergency Medical Dispatch Section of the Guam Fire Department, signed Paul Rolinski; one from the Acting ARF Fire Chief, CPA Saipan, CPA CNMI; one from Commissioner of Fire and EMS Juan Pua; and lastly, a support letter from Defense Assistant Fire Chief Cody Norita. Just for the record. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Marissa Renee Flores: I yield my time to Representative Benavente.

The Chair recognized Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente.

Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the distributions of funds, what Representative John Paul Sablan has offered, we have passed it. I agree with that point. But as far as the definitions of the PSS, I also agree to that it would be a priority to students and the teachers at the school level. I know that we are challenged with the budget, and I know the intent of that bill is embedded in the budget. I mean the intent of that provision is also embedded in the budget. But I know, also, that we have a definition to define the 25% provision with regard to the PSS as far as the constitution mandates. I would like to say that we will go ahead

with that to make it more, even though it is already in there, we still have to go in there. And I do not appreciate—we have discussed this, too, Mr. Speaker. That I still have to meet with my members to discuss the sensitivity and everything on this PSS. And I want to get an assurance from you that we still have to follow this through. This is a constitutional mandate that we are working on. 18-12 was my bill. And that is what brings up the 25%. That is to help the students and the PSS. So, I know the sensitivity and the workload that needs to be done with this. You do not just yank it out from the committee or anything like that. You got to give chance to the committee to work on whatever we need to do and get the consensus of the members. I respect that type of process. And it is within your authority as a speaker. So, I just want to make sure that is well guarded as far as what we are moving on with this. But I agree with what we approve today. Other than that, for the definition, we have to make it permanent. But if we cannot then, we can always do it every budget year; every budget year that they request or that we do the budget, we can always insert that based on priorities. Thank you.

The Chair recognized the Floor Leader.

Floor Leader Marissa Renee Flores: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is miscellaneous, so I cannot get into a debate. But yes, I have to say that this budget was a very tedious process in which the Ways and Means Chairman, Vice Chairman, and the members really battled it out on language and intent, purpose, and obligation, and we worked very hard on that bill. My hope is that, for future bills, and I know there is an obligation to the retirees, and that we must abide by that obligation, and we must pay it. However, there are other obligations that we need to address. And such obligations are vendor payments that have lasted almost 4 or 5 years. But most importantly, land compensation. That has been the obligation since the time of taking for many of those that are still due rightful payments. Many of them have passed on with no compensation at all provided to them. Many will be passing on just like the retirees. It is the same age and the same people that are wanting by obligation and the definition of that, and their payment as well. So, I hope that in terms of what is provided to us by the constitution and policies that were passed to pay this down, I ask as members to work towards coming up with new ideas on how to pay this liability. Because they are due, and they were supposed to be paid down. The design of the Commonwealth was needed to build infrastructure, roads, water wells, and what have you. Lands were taken to accommodate this need to build a Commonwealth. But yet, they have been denied. They have been ignored. They have been underfunded. But I do not want to wait anymore until many of them pass on. And then what do we do? What is our face to those families that waited? The director of DPL or the secretary of DPL just put in a communication last week that there are several individuals' claimants that are due, and that is in the tune of \$10 million. Now, where do we find that? And who is going to suffer to pay that? But in all fairness, we are all suffering too to pay for the retirement and the settlement. So, this is another time again where we need to sit and really think about who we serve. Because everybody in here in their district and their village and their precinct has someone, two, three, or maybe four that are still due their compensation for land taking to build a Commonwealth. They gave their land to build a commonwealth, and they still have not been paid. So, there are so many obligations, retirees, land compensations, businesses, and sole proprietors that went into agreements with the Commonwealth. There are a lot of underfunded DPS, possibly. Maybe an underfunded judiciary, an underfunded CHCC, and underfunded everything because we have one obligation, or two obligations actually, that are mandated: the 25% for PSS and the retirees. You add that together, and that is almost our entire budget. So, what

happens? I just needed to say that I have been getting a lot of calls because of recent developments of a \$2,000,000 SNILD appropriation that was passed, and not one item included land compensation. So, I had to express that for the sake of those families and individuals in my precinct that are still due land compensation. And my job is to advocate for my constituents and the Commonwealth. But this land compensation matter needs to be dealt with because we are not going to wait for another lawsuit. But if we continue to kick this can down the line, that is exactly what we are going to get. Then that is an obligation, mandated and adjudicated by the court. Do we want that? Well, that is something that we should ponder on this weekend. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I yield my time.

The Chair recognized Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul.

Representative Ralph Naraja Yumul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First and foremost, I would like to thank our Chairman John Paul Sablan of Ways and Means for handling the liberation with fairness to all the agencies and all. Not everyone was completely satisfied, but just so the public and everyone knows that what we were given was a set amount of identified resources. And the job of the Ways and Means is to split it all apart. None of our members went against a lot of what was proposed by the administration. Especially with PSS. We did our very best to try to identify funds. And I believe he introduced the MPLT loan to make up, should that come to our table. He handled it pretty well, for his first time. And we gave him a hard time, especially certain things. But he handled it really well, and I appreciate that. Also, we have to put the 25% to rest by having the courts, just like the settlement fund, identify exact amounts. Because what we are dealing with, right now, is just resources that we are trying to collect and sometimes we do not collect the amount. So, we need to have the courts intervene because a lot of the dept service, and other new debt was done way before 18-12. So, we need to look at whether that fund should be taken out of the general resources. Because the CNMI Government entered into a contract with the bond companies, and that is set aside whenever we collect taxes. That first 6 or \$7,000,000.00 is set aside right away, because that is our obligation. Now the settlement fund came in later after 18-12. But it went through the court system, and the court defined what we owe to the settlement fund. And that is why every year we set aside, and I know, we all know the administration excluded the \$29,000,000.00. And that is why we had to put it back into the budget and remove everyone, or the amounts from the total amount so that we can satisfy the lawsuit. So we addressed that. I think every member agreed to it. When the depth or the MPLT loan comes into play, maybe we can restore back most of those funds, back to PSS. And they can continue with their programs. But the committee also ensured that the teachers and the school remain open by ensuring that the funds that are given to them goes straight to the teachers. That would prevent closures of schools or reduction of hours. So, we want to make sure the teachers are, at least, protected. Other than that, I think we still have to identify what is the definition of general resources versus general revenue. So, that needs to be addressed soon. And with that, I yield my time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair recognized Representative Roy Christopher Aldan Ada.

Representative Roy Christopher Aldan Ada: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to thank all my colleagues for supporting House Bill No. 24-32, authored by myself and Representative Julie Ogo. This bill actually was introduced by our late Congressman Ivan Blanco, reintroduced by our former Congressman Angelo Demapan, and then introduced again by Representative Julie Ogo, and then

this legislature we introduced it. This bill, actually, would kind of uniform the hotel occupancy tax and realize some of the monies that were circumventing the whole hotel occupancy tax system. Again, colleagues, thank you. I know this is going to be a work in progress. We will have to work with our counterparts in the Senate, and hopefully we can get this out and implement it so that finance and commerce can start working together to put together some policies as to how to go about collecting and monitoring these activities. So, thank you. I yield.

The Chair recognized Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan.

Representative Vincent Raymond Aldan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I just want to thank the governor for signing the House Bill, I mean, Public Law 24-11. And I know some people do not understand what transpired in trying to come up with that number. I just wanted to let the people understand, because I did get some frustrating comments from our people, and I totally understand. One of those comments was, “Why do we not just pay all the bill? Just get rid of it. Pay it all off, and get rid of the fact.” Let me just put out some numbers on why we did not. And in order to save and get this budget through and whatnot. Because even I have my synapses in my brain working overdrive just trying to punch up these numbers, and if we were to do what the public actually really wanted, which I mean, we do want it too, but it is unreasonable and unrealistic. Because if we look at the numbers right, as of July 31st, 2025, the whole government owes you in arrears \$77,400,000.00. And the budget that we came up with, with everything that all the money is collected, and all the money that is left over after paying off all the payments for PSS retirees, is \$133,000,000.00. If we actually exercise the choice of paying off the arrears, just so that we could get rid of the fact that it will be 57.8% of the whole entire budget. If we do that, then paying for retirees will be off the table, first responders off the table, and schools off the table. So, just to make the people understand the reason why, as much as we would love to pay off the arrears for utilities so that nobody keeps looking at the fact rate on your God-forbidden utility bill. That is the reason why we cannot just do a shock treatment and pay off the utility bill. The numbers do not match what we want to do. We have to take care of everybody, not just one thing. So, we prioritize. Do we want to pay the retirees? Yes, we do. Do we want to keep the police functioning? Yes, we do. Do we want to the hospital to keep operating? Yes, we do. Do we want to give PSS their funding? Yes, we do. So, we have to make a hard choice. We cannot pay the \$77,400,000.00 right off the bat. I hope that you know that the public does read the bills. And if you should have any questions, comments, or concerns, we are all open to answer them. We are all working together, and it is not a walk in the park. But I am pretty sure your representative will be more than willing to help explain. We do not like it as much as you do, but it is what we have to work with. That is it. I yield my time.

The Chair recognized Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente.

Representative Roman Cepeda Benavente: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to be remiss. I would like to extend my gratitude to the Chairman of Ways and Means. He has done, I think, a tremendous job as far as putting us together and setting us up. Open collaboration with the budget office and also with PSS. So, in line with all the challenges that we are facing forward, he is very adamant about making sure that we come into a spreading ground. Meaning, we have an equal cut on as much as we can. As far as the budget is concerned, it is not a laughing matter. Because you know what? It is a hard time right now. We are having hard times right now. And you can be

laughing, but I will tell you something: it is not easy for everybody. It is the way the budget is right now. It is like when you have your house, and you have to look at your priorities, and you spend where it best fits. And that is the challenge right now. That is the challenge that we have within this government right now. Whose fault is it? I will not blame anybody. But we are here, so I would just like to say to all of you guys that took part in the budget, thank you. Because we all put this thing together, and we try to do the best that we can. Thank you.

The Chair recognized Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino, Jr.

Representative Daniel Iwashita Aquino, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to thank Chairman John Paul Sablan, my colleague, for rising to the occasion of the Ways and Means. I wanted to be in his committee but *taya kampu lao*, Chairman if you have opening, I am willing to serve. I know that all good things always start precinct 2. Right, colleague? If anybody wants to move to precinct 2, we have a lot of apartment rentals that are very affordable. And Representative John Paul and myself are working hard, together also with the Mayor cleaning our village. And I want us to also reach out to the Senate, this rising crime of repeat offenders is really concerning, and my bill is still stuck with the JGO (Judicial and Governmental Operations) Committee. So, please, let us work together to expedite some of our bills that are on hold in the JGO Committee. Thank you.

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

Representative Joel Castro Camacho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just like to thank all the members that donated some water for the upcoming San Roque fiesta on Sunday. And on behalf of Representative Omar and myself, we would like to invite you all to our fiesta. It is a 75th anniversary for the San Roque Parish. Thank you, again.

Speaker Edmund Joseph Sablan Villagomez: What time is the fiesta and the date?

Representative Joel Castro Camacho: It is at 4:00 p.m., this Sunday, August 17, 2025.

The Chair recognized Representative John Paul Palacios Sablan.

Representative John Paul Palacios Camacho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to announce to the members of the committee on Ways and Means that I am calling for a committee meeting on Tuesday, August 19, 2025, at 09:30 in the morning, so that we can deliberate on the remaining referred bills that are in the committee. Thank you.

The Chair recognized Representative Joel Castro Camacho.

Representative Joel Castro Camacho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to respond that we will be calling a JGO meeting, too. Sometime next week. All the bills that are supposedly stuck there, we will try to get them out. Thank you.

The Chair recognized Representative Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona.

Representative Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a reminder to the community, this August 17 and 18, Sunday and Monday, East Side Cuts in Kagman will be offering free haircuts to kiddos for back-to-school. So, if you know any kids that are in need, please send them over. And I would like to thank my colleague Representative Angelo Camacho, again, for collaborating with East Side Cuts and making this happen for our kids. So, thank you.

The Chair recognized Representative Roy Christopher Aldan Ada.

Representative Roy Christopher Aldan Ada: I would like to also announce that precinct 1 has also collaborated in putting together a free haircut for back-to-school this Sunday at San Vicente Hairmate barber shop. Starting at 09:00 a.m. Thank you.

The Chair recognized Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo.

Representative Julie Marie Atalig Ogo: I just wanted to invite the people of the CNMI to our Sweet Potato Coconut Festival that is happening next Friday, on the 22nd. We have a lot of exciting activities going on, and a lot of delicious food. So, you only have to fly in to eat that. We will not export anymore of that. But I do want to invite you all, if you can please join us. Thank you.

There being no further discussion on the floor, 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 11:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Brenalyn T. Santos
House Journal Clerk

APPEARANCE OF LOCAL BILLS

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

SECOND LEGISLATIVE DAY:

THIRD LEGISLATIVE DAY:

Appearance of Measures introduced on the House Floor during the House Session on July 31, 2025:

H. B. NO. 24-40: To amend Title 4 of the Commonwealth Code to clarify the application of business registration, licensing, and tax laws to foreign corporations engaged in land development, infrastructure development, or construction activities in the Commonwealth, including those related to development projects performed under or in connection with contracts, subcontracts, or agreements with the United States. Introduced by REP. MARISSA R. FLORES of Saipan, Precinct 3 (for herself) on July 31, 2025 and was moved and placed on the Bill Calendar.

H. B. NO. 24-41: To establish regulations on vehicle window tinting for safety and security in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. JOSEPH A. FLORES of Saipan, Precinct 1 (for himself, and Representative Roy C.A. Ada) on July 31, 2025; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

H. B. NO. 24-42: To mandate comprehensive, standards-based financial literacy education in all public high schools and middle schools of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI); to establish curriculum standards, teacher training support, integration with workforce development programs, and implementation timelines; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. VINCENT R. ALDAN of Saipan, Precinct 1 (for himself, Representatives Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Blas Jonathan “BJ” T. Attao, Joel C. Camacho, Marissa R. Flores, John Paul P. Sablan, Edmund S. Villagomez, Denita K. Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on July 31, 2025; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Education.

[ADDED-7/31/2025] H. B. NO. 24-43: To create a new criminal offense for Desecration or Theft of Memorials and Historical Sites. Introduced by REP. JULIE M. A. OGO of Rota, Precinct 7 (for herself, Representatives Vincent R. Aldan, Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, and Ralph N. Yumul) on July 31, 2025; subsequently referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations and to the House Committee on Tourism.

[ADDED-7/31/2025] H. B. NO. 24-44: To amend 9 CMC §8209 by removing the seven-day grace period for motorists who violate 9 CMC §§8203 and 8204 with the citation effective immediately; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. JOSEPH A. FLORES of Saipan, Precinct 1 (for himself, Representatives Vincent R. Aldan, Julie M. A. Ogo, Malcolm J. Omar, Elias J.M. Rangamar, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on July 31, 2025.

H. L. B. NO. 24-20: To appropriate Forty Two Thousand Dollars (\$42,000.00) from revenues collected from poker fees in the Second Senatorial District; and for other purposes. Introduced by REP. PATRICK H. SAN NICOLAS of Tinian, Precinct 6 (for himself) on July 31, 2025.

[ADDED-7/31/2025] H. L. B. NO. 24-21: To appropriate \$2,000,000.00 of the dividends collected by the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority (CEDA) from the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) to assist the Department of Finance and Commonwealth Economic Development Authority with funding related to the Third Senatorial District. Introduced by REP. BLAS JONATHAN “BJ” T. ATTAO of Saipan, Precinct 3 (for himself, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada, Vincent R. Aldan, Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Malcolm J. Omar, Elias J.M. Rangamar, John Paul P. Sablan, Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, and Ralph N. Yumul) on July 31, 2025.

H. J. R. NO. 24-3: To urge the United States Congress to require all contractors and subcontractors performing federally funded work in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to register with the CNMI Department of Finance and certify compliance with CNMI tax laws as a condition of receiving federal payments, to request the U.S. Department of Defense to adopt a CNMI-specific clause in the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) to institutionalize this requirement, and to affirm the CNMI’s right under Section 703(b) of the Covenant to receive federal income tax revenues generated from contract work performed in the Commonwealth. Introduced by REP. BLAS JONATHAN “BJ” T. ATTAO of Saipan, Precinct 3 (for himself, Representatives Roy C.A. Ada, Vincent R. Aldan, Daniel I. Aquino Jr., Roman C. Benavente, Angelo A. Camacho, Diego V. F. Camacho, Joel C. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Thomas J. DIC. Manglona, Julie M. A. Ogo, 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 July 31, 2025; subsequently placed on the Resolution Calendar.

H. J. R. NO. 24-4: To authorize the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, through its Governor, to submit to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development the Action Plan for the Community Development Block Grant Application No. B-25-ST69-0001, the Home Investment Partnership Grant Application No. M-25-ST69-0203, the National Housing Trust Fund Grant Application No. F-25-ST69-0203, and the Emergency Solutions Grant Application No. E-25-DC69- 0001; to receive the funds requested therein; and to assume all responsibilities that may be imposed pursuant to those grants. Introduced by: REP. JOEL C. CAMACHO 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, 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 July 31, 2025; subsequently placed on the Resolution Calendar.

H. J. R. NO. 24-5: To recognize and acknowledge the National Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) and the Guam-CNMI ESGR State Committee and their volunteer members for their exceptional service and commitment to our service men and women and to thank and appreciate our civilian employers for their utmost support to our service members by recognizing the week of August 4th through August 8th, 2025 as “Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Week”. Introduced by REP. EDMUND S. VILLAGOMEZ of Saipan, Precinct 3, (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, Joel C. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Thomas J. DIC. Manglona, 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, and Ralph N. Yumul) on July 31, 2025; subsequently placed on the Resolution Calendar.

H. J. R. NO. 24-6: Commending the distinguished life and extraordinary contributions of the late Honorable Governor Arnold Indalecio Palacios to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and its people and to acknowledge his enduring legacy as a genuine statesman. Introduced by REP. EDMUND S. VILLAGOMEZ of Saipan, Precinct 3, (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, Joel C. Camacho, Joseph A. Flores, Marissa R. Flores, Thomas J. DIC. Manglona, Julie M. A. Ogo, 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 July 31, 2025; subsequently placed on the Resolution Calendar.