



GOV. COMM. 24-162
(HOUSE)

David M. Apatang
Governor

Dennis James C. Mendiola
Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

July 02, 2026

OV2026-425

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

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



7/14/26

Dear Mr. Speaker and Mr. President:

This is to inform you that I have signed into law **House Bill No. 24-96, SD1, CCS1**, entitled, "To appropriate \$960, 235.74 in Tobacco Settlement Funds, identified by the Governor as additional funds available for appropriation in the Governor's Communication (House) 24-103, to the Marianas Visitors Authority for tourism stabilization initiatives.", which was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

This bill becomes **Public Law No. 24-33**. Copies bearing my signature are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,

DAVID M. APATANG
Governor

RECEIVED BY [Signature]
DATE 7/16/2026 TIME 9:19 AM

cc: Lieutenant Governor; Attorney General; Commonwealth Law Revision Commission;
Public Auditor; Secretary of Finance; Marianas Visitors Authority;
Special Assistant for Administration; Programs and Legislative Review



TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANA COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

THIRD REGULAR SESSION

FEBRUARY 25, 2026

REPRESENTATIVE MARISSA R. FLORES OF SAIPAN, PRECINCT 3 (*for herself*, Representatives 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, 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, and Ralph N. Yumul) in an open and public meeting with an opportunity for the public to comment, introduced the following Bill:

H. B. No. 24-96, SD1, CCS1 AN ACT

TO APPROPRIATE \$960,235.74 IN TOBACCO SETTLEMENT FUNDS, IDENTIFIED BY THE GOVERNOR AS ADDITIONAL FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR APPROPRIATION IN GOVERNOR'S COMMUNICATION (HOUSE) 24-103, TO THE MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY FOR TOURISM STABILIZATION INITIATIVES.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Bill was not referred to a House Committee.

**THE BILL WAS PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON
FIRST AND FINAL READING, FEBRUARY 25, 2026;
without amendments and transmitted to THE SENATE.**

IN THE SENATE

The Bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Fiscal Affairs.
**THE BILL WAS PASSED BY THE SENATE ON FIRST AND FINAL READING, MAY 1, 2026;
with amendments in the form of H. B. No. 24-96, SD1 and returned to THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES.**

The House of Representatives rejected the Senate amendments and the Bill was sent to Conference, which submitted Conference Committee Report 24-5.

**H. B. No. 24-96, SD1, CCS1 IS DULY PASSED BY THE TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE.**


Linda B. Muña, House Clerk



TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FIRST DAY, THIRD SPECIAL SESSION

JUNE 18, 2026

H. B. No. 24-96, SD1, CCS1

AN ACT

TO APPROPRIATE \$960,235.74 IN TOBACCO SETTLEMENT FUNDS, IDENTIFIED BY THE GOVERNOR AS ADDITIONAL FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR APPROPRIATION IN GOVERNOR'S COMMUNICATION (HOUSE) 24-103, TO THE MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY FOR TOURISM STABILIZATION INITIATIVES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:

1 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.**

2 Tourism is the cornerstone of the Commonwealth's private-sector economy
3 and remains directly dependent on sustained air access, destination
4 competitiveness, and visitor demand. The Legislature finds that, despite
5 stabilization efforts, the tourism sector continues to operate under severe
6 constraints, including airline seat capacity well below pre-pandemic levels,
7 reduced or suspended routes, historically low hotel occupancy outside limited peak
8 periods, and declining visitor arrivals that closely track airlift availability.

HOUSE BILL 24-96, SD1, CCS1

1 Ongoing structural and external pressures have materially impeded
2 stabilization, including unfavorable exchange rates in core source markets, global
3 aircraft delivery delays, heightened regional competition driven by aggressive
4 subsidy programs, and aviation market uncertainty affecting carrier deployment
5 decisions. The Legislature further finds that existing hotel occupancy levels
6 remain far below estimated break-even thresholds, locally generated revenues
7 such as Hotel Occupancy Tax collections have declined sharply from pre-pandemic
8 levels, and these revenue shortfalls have constrained the scale and timing of
9 tourism stabilization efforts.

10 Uninterrupted and reliable air service is the most critical determinant of
11 tourism performance in the Commonwealth, as evidenced by strong load factors
12 despite overall capacity reductions. The Legislature finds that strategic airline
13 incentive support, cooperative marketing programs, and sustained destination
14 branding are necessary to retain existing service, stabilize frequencies, encourage
15 seasonal and future expansion, and signal to airline partners that the
16 Commonwealth is committed to protecting and rebuilding its airlift in a highly
17 competitive regional environment.

18 Responding to these conditions, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate
19 \$960,235.74 in Tobacco Settlement Funds, identified by the Governor as
20 additional funds available for appropriation from outside sources, in Governor's
21 Communication (House) 24-103, to the Marianas Visitors Authority for tourism
22 stabilization efforts.

HOUSE BILL 24-96, SD1, CCS1

SECTION 2. APPROPRIATION.

Notwithstanding any laws, rules, or regulations to the contrary, the Tobacco Settlement Funds in the amount of \$960,235.74 is hereby appropriated as follows:

(a) \$960,235.74 shall be allocated to the Marianas Visitors Authority for tourism stabilization efforts. The expenditure authority shall be the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Marianas Visitors Authority. Provided however that \$70,000.00 each for the First and Second Senatorial Districts shall be used for stabilization efforts.

SECTION 3. NO FISCAL LIMITATION.

The funds appropriated under Section 2 shall be without fiscal year limitation.

SECTION 4. SEVERABILITY.

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

SECTION 5. SAVINGS CLAUSE.

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

HOUSE BILL 24-96, SD1, CCS1

SECTION 6. EFFECTIVE DATE.

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

Attested to by:


Linda B. Muña, House Clerk

Certified by:


ACTING SPEAKER DIEGO V.F. CAMACHO
House of Representatives
24th Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature

 Approved this 2nd day of July, 2026


DAVID M. APATANG
Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands