

TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

Third Regular SESSION, 2026

S. L. I. NO. 24-05

A SENATE LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE

To amend Article XI, Section 6 of the CNMI Constitution to authorize the use of up to twenty-five percent (25%) of public land lease revenues for land compensation.

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

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

2 Public lands in the Commonwealth are held in trust for the benefit of the people.
3 Over the years, the Commonwealth government has acquired or used private lands for
4 public purposes, creating legal obligations to fairly compensate landowners. Many of these
5 land compensation claims remain unpaid, which has caused hardship for affected families
6 and has continued to place financial and legal strain on the government. Resolving these
7 obligations is a matter of fairness, responsibility, and respect for property rights.

8 Revenue earned from leasing public lands is a stable source of income that can be
9 used carefully to help address these unpaid obligations. However, the Constitution does
10 not clearly allow public land lease revenues to be used for land compensation. This
11 amendment recognizes the need for a limited and responsible solution by allowing a portion
12 of those revenues to be set aside specifically for land compensation, while still protecting
13 the long-term health of the Marianas Public Land Trust.

14 The purpose of this constitutional amendment is to allow up to twenty-five percent
15 (25%) of revenues earned from the lease of public lands to be used to pay land
16 compensation owed by the Commonwealth government. This change would help ensure
17 that individuals whose lands were taken or used for public purposes are fairly compensated.

18 The amendment also requires that the details of how these funds are used—

1 including the amount, conditions, and process for payments be established by law to ensure
2 transparency, accountability, and protection of the Trust’s funds. By approving this
3 amendment, voters would give the Commonwealth a clear and responsible way to address
4 long-standing land compensation obligations while preserving public land resources for
5 future generations.

6 **Section 2. Legislative Initiative.** The Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas
7 Commonwealth Legislature, by the affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members of
8 each house present and voting, hereby proposes the following amendment to Article XI,
9 Section 6 of the Constitution to be placed before the people for ratification:

10 **“PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT”**

11 To amend Article XI, Section 6 of the Northern Mariana Islands Constitution to
12 authorize the use of up to twenty-five percent (25%) of public land lease revenues for land
13 compensation.

14 **(A) Amendment.** CNMI Constitution Article XI, Section 6 is hereby
15 amended to read as follows:

16 **“Section 6: Marianas Public Land Trust.**

17 There is hereby established the Marianas Public Land Trust.

18 (a) The trust shall have three trustees appointed by the governor with the advice
19 and consent of the senate. After this Constitution has been in effect for ten years, the
20 number of trustees appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the senate
21 shall be increased to five. Three shall be from Saipan, one from Rota, and one from Tinian.
22 At least one trustee shall be a woman, and at least one trustee shall be of Carolinian descent.
23 The trustees shall serve for a term of six years, except that the term of office shall be
24 staggered, accomplished as follows: three trustees shall serve for four years, and two
25 trustees shall serve for six years, as determined by drawing of lots.

26 (b) The trustees shall make reasonable, careful, and prudent investments. For ten
27 years after the effective date of this Constitution, investments may not be made except in
28 obligations of the United States government and as provided by section 6(c).

1 (c) If the legislature authorizes a Marianas development bank and provides that all
2 United States economic assistance for economic development loans provided under article
3 VII, section 702(c), of the Covenant shall be deposited as capital in that bank, the trust shall
4 use up to fifty-five percent of its receipts in a year to increase the total capital available to
5 the bank to the sum of ten million dollars. After the bank has more than ten million dollars
6 in total capital, the bank shall pay the excess above ten million dollars to the trust until the
7 trust has been fully repaid for its contribution to the bank.

8 (d) The trustees shall carry out the intention of article VIII, section 803(e), of the
9 Covenant by using the interest on the amount received for the lease of property at Tanapag
10 Harbor for the development and maintenance of a memorial park. ~~The trustees shall~~
11 ~~transfer to the general revenues of the Commonwealth the remaining interest accrued on~~
12 ~~the trust proceeds except that the trustees may retain the amount necessary to meet~~
13 ~~reasonable expenses of administration.~~

14 (e) The trustees shall reserve twenty-five percent (25%) of the revenues derived
15 from the lease of public lands to pay land compensation obligations owed by the
16 Commonwealth government to persons whose lands were acquired or used for public
17 purposes. The amount, conditions, and process of such payments shall be prescribed by
18 law, ensuring transparency, accountability, and the protection of the corpus of the Trust.


19 (f) The trustees shall transfer to the general revenues of the Commonwealth the
20 remaining interest accrued on the trust proceeds, except that the trustees may retain the
21 amount necessary to meet reasonable expenses of administration.

22 (e g) The trustees shall make an annual written report to the people of the
23 Commonwealth accounting for the revenues received and expenses incurred by the trust
24 and describing the investments and other transactions authorized by the trustees.

25 (f h) The trustees shall be held to strict standards of fiduciary care. Each trustee
26 shall annually submit to the governor and the presiding officers of the legislature a report
27 disclosing their financial affairs, as provided by law.”

1 **Section 3. Adoption and Transmittal.** The President of the Senate and the
2 Speaker of the House shall certify and the Senate Legislative Secretary and House Clerk
3 shall attest to the adoption of this Legislative Initiative. The Senate Clerk shall then cause
4 the Initiative to be transmitted to the Governor and the Board of Elections with instructions
5 that the Board place it before the people of the Commonwealth for a ratification vote, in
6 conformance with Article XVIII, Section 5 of the Commonwealth Constitution.

Dated: 2/26/06

Introduced By: 
Senator Donald Manglona

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:


Senate Legal Counsel