

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 21-15

RE: COMMITTEE TO WAIT ON THE PRESIDENT

NOVEMBER 18, 2020

The Honorable Wesley W. Simina
Speaker, Twenty-First Congress
Federated States of Micronesia
Ninth Special Session, 2020

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee to Wait on the President was duly appointed on July 1, 2020, consisting of members Esmond B. Moses, Peter M. Christian, Ferny S. Perman and Dion D. Neth. Esmond B. Moses was designated as the chairman.

The Committee met with the President on November 17, 2020, at 9:00 a.m. Chairman Moses greeted the President, and key members of the Executive on behalf of Congress, and thanked them for the opportunity to meet. Chairman Moses reported that Congress was in session and was ready to transact business.

Your Committee received an agenda from the President communicating the priorities the Executive branch wished action on this session.

The first item on the President's agenda was the recent revenue projections. The President stated that after the last session of Congress there is approximately \$1.2 million available in the General Fund for appropriation.

The second item on the President's agenda was the proposed legislation to temporarily suspend the polling places in Guam and Hawaii for the upcoming election. The President said that the Executive is promoting absentee voting to ensure everyone signs up for an absentee ballot before the

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deadline expires. He asked for Congress to take action on this bill this session.

The third item on the President's agenda was the proposed legislation to expand the mandate for the Joint Committee on Compact Review and Planning (hereinafter "JCRP"). He acknowledged that Congress has already had a hearing on this bill and reassured your Committee that he too has been in extensive discussions with the JCRP regarding this bill. He asked that Congress take up this matter during this short session. The President noted that he has received communications from Arnold & Porter and Jim Stovall in regards to how the new administration in the United States will affect the negotiations. He stated that he will continue to monitor the situation and will share information with Congress.

The fourth item on the President's agenda was a request for supplemental funding for INTERPOL membership fees and the COM-FSM Endowment Fund. He noted that this request was sent over last session and was asking for it to be included in any supplemental budget that will be considered. He also stated that the INTERPOL fee is due next month so it is critical to act on this as soon as possible. Regarding the COM-FSM Endowment Fund, the President stated that he had met with the current and the past Presidents of the college and they asked for this endowment to be supported again this fiscal year.

The fifth item on the President's agenda was the funding for the public awareness campaign for the two Constitutional Amendments passed by the Fourth Constitutional Convention of the Federated States of Micronesia (hereinafter "ConCon"). He noted that there is little time left before the March election so the public awareness campaign is a priority.

The President stated that the public awareness campaign will consist of five teams of for each of the four states and one team in the United States of America. He noted that the members of the public awareness committee will be comprised from members of the ConCon delegations,

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representatives from each state appointed by the governors, one member from each Congressional delegation, and members of non-governmental organizations and community partners in the United States of America.

The President anticipated that there may be some difficulties securing vessels to reach the outer islands which will require additional funding. He estimated that the public awareness campaign will require a budget of approximately \$400,000. He also noted that the ConCon may have a balance remaining from their original appropriation which could partially cover the request.

The President also requested supplemental funding for the Department of Personnel. The budget for the Department of Personnel was not fully funded as the Department was not fully organized. The Department now has a director and is fully functional, thus in need of supplemental funds in the amount of \$87,000 to support its operations.

The sixth item on the President's agenda was the bill pending with Congress to expand the Tourism Sector Mitigation Fund (hereinafter "TSMF"). The President noted that Congress has already had hearings on this bill and hopes that it will act on this bill this session.

The seventh item on the President's agenda was the early December Guam repatriation flight. The President noted that a circular diplomatic note was issued to all the embassies and non-governmental organizations (hereinafter "NGO"). The United States of America has agreed to provide a military plane to facilitate the flight, which will bring 50 individuals comprised of diplomats, MiCare patients on referral in Guam with attendees, students, heads of NGO's with diplomatic status, and FSM Senators.

The President relayed that all the individuals scheduled to be on the flight will begin a pre-flight quarantine this Friday (November 20th) at the quarantine facility in Guam. He emphasized that he has demanded an air-tight process be in place to ensure public safety upon the arrival of these individuals.

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The eighth item on the President's agenda was the emergency declaration and the need to extend it further. He acknowledged that the declaration is expiring and encouraged Congress to extend it once again. He noted that there may be some suggested changes to the declaration in regards to transshipments, but those details are being discussed between the Department of Justice and NORMA. He stated that once they have concluded their consultations, they will submit any recommended changes.

There was a general discussion about the vaccines that are becoming available to combat COVID-19. The Secretary of Health and Social Affairs explained some complications he anticipates with the various vaccines, such as being able to keep the vaccine at freezing temperatures during its shelf life. He stated that they will continue to monitor the situation to determine which vaccine will be appropriate for the FSM.

The Secretary of Finance and Administration stated that they have set aside funding to purchase the vaccine if/when it is available. The President also listed several sources of potential funding to purchase the vaccine. He also stated that he has a sub-group of the National Task Force that specifically deals with vaccines.

Finally, the President informed your committee regarding the status of several of the government's ships. He stated that the Voyager is headed back to Pohnpei and is expected back either today or tomorrow. He stated that they have been at sea for 14 days and will spend another 14 days at anchorage in Pohnpei. They will all be tested for COVID-19 before being released back into the community. The Chief Milo is still in the Philippines and once the Voyager has been successfully cleared from quarantine, then the Executive will make a plan for their repatriation.

The President stated that the Navigator is headed back to Pohnpei for routine maintenance after being out to sea for almost two months. It will be departing to the Southern islands of Pohnpei in late November then to the Eastern

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islands of Pohnpei and Kosrae in mid-December, returning to Pohnpei before Christmas.

In conclusion, the President stated that the Lady Minto ran aground in Kapingamarangi, suffering minor damage. It is still scheduled to arrive in Nukuoro before returning to Pohnpei. He stated that the appropriate administrative action has taken place to address the individual who was responsible for the damage to the ship.

The meeting concluded with mutual agreement to move forward on the above issues in a timely and cooperative manner. Your Committee kindly requests the members address any further questions regarding the priority issues for this session to the members of the Committee during the discussion of this report at session.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Esmond B. Moses
Esmond B. Moses, chairman

/s/ Peter M. Christian
Peter M. Christian, member

/s/ Ferny S. Perman
Ferny S. Perman, member

Dion G. Neth, member