

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 21-17

RE: COMMITTEE TO WAIT ON THE PRESIDENT

March 23, 2021

The Honorable Wesley W. Simina
Speaker, Twenty-First Congress
Federated States of Micronesia
Tenth Special Session, 2021

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee to Wait on the President was duly appointed on March 22, 2021, consisting of members Ferny S. Perman, Isaac V. Figir, Aren B. Palik, and Derensio S. Konman. Senator Ferny S. Perman was designated as the Chairman.

The Committee met with the President on March 22, 2021, at twelve-thirty p.m., in the President's Conference Room, with Senator Perman present in person and the other members present via Zoom. The President welcomed those members of Congress present and thanked them for attending. Chairman Perman greeted the President and key members of the Executive Branch on behalf of Congress, and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet. Chairman Perman reported that Congress was in session and was ready to transact business.

The President began the substantive portion of the meeting by presenting an agenda of action items that the Executive Branch would like to see prioritized during this session and several topics for informational purposes. The President's agenda is as follows:

- Nominations for Congressional Confirmation
- COVID-19 Vaccine Update
- First FSM Global Climate Fund Funded Project Signing Ceremony

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 21-17

RE: COMMITTEE TO WAIT ON THE PRESIDENT

March 23, 2021

- Update on the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)
- Executive Supplemental Budget Request
- Final Preparations of the FY22 National Government Budget Submission

Nominations for Congressional Confirmation

The first item on the President's agenda is nominations for Congressional confirmation. The President stated that he will be submitting at least 7 nominations this session to fill the vacancies in his cabinet. He listed the following vacancies as potentially being sent over for consideration: the Secretary of Resources and Development; the Secretary of Health and Social Affairs; the Secretary of the Department of Education; the Election Director; the National Public Defender; ambassadors in New York, Fiji, and Hawaii; and member of the Compact Trust Fund Board.

COVID-19 Vaccination Update

The President thanked the Senators for their initiatives to promote the citizenry getting vaccinated. The President provided graphs and charts to illustrate the current situation. These supplemental materials are attached to this report for reference.

The President yielded to his Cabinet members to discuss and update your Committee on the status. They explained that there have been approximately 13,000 plus citizens nationwide who have received the first dose of the vaccine and 8,600 plus who are fully vaccinated. They stated that the country has received 46,000 doses of the vaccine thus far to vaccinate the approximately 58,000 plus eligible citizens. They went on to explain that the country has received 800 doses of the Johnson & Johnson one shot vaccine which was given to Chuuk due to their geographic challenges. They expect more of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to come in soon and it will be allocated upon consultations with the states.

There was a general discussion between your Committee and the Executive regarding the low turn out to get vaccinated

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 21-17

RE: COMMITTEE TO WAIT ON THE PRESIDENT

March 23, 2021

and thoughts in how to encourage citizens to get the vaccine. The President stated that he is tying the grant of low-income assistance from the Asian Development Bank funds to the vaccine, by requiring the recipients to be fully vaccinated before they can receive the funding.

The President also spoke about getting the vaccination rates up so that the nation may begin repatriation of citizens from Hawaii and Guam in Mid-May. He stated that he had hoped to bring back citizens from the non-COVID affected countries of the Marshall Islands and Palau as soon as possible but that plan has run into some unforeseen obstacles with the arraignment of flights. He hopes to bring back those citizens once that impediment is cleared up.

There were further discussions regarding ways to help raise the vaccination rates, suggested guidelines for citizens wanting to be repatriated, and anticipated dates to do simulations in the states.

First FSM Global Climate Fund (GCF) Funded Project Signing Ceremony

The President noted that he signed the first Global Climate Fund funded project in the FSM on Friday, March 19, 2021. The \$10 million project which is co-financed with the FSM is the lowest threshold of projects funded by the GCF and will be implemented by the Micronesian Conservation Trust. While the specifics of the project will be worked out between the National Government, the State Governments, and the Micronesian Conservation Trust, it will be for climate resilient food security. The project is estimated to reach 68,000 farmers over a five-year span. The President reiterated that this is a country owned, country driven project.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 21-17

RE: COMMITTEE TO WAIT ON THE PRESIDENT

March 23, 2021

Update on the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)

The President discussed joining the WICHE. He mentioned that this had been a discussion in the past and has been revived again. He stated that inclusion in WICHE will result in college students gaining access to more scholarships and lower tuition. Upon joining the WICHE, FSM students will be able to receive in-state tuition, without the need to meet residency requirements, at other member universities, resulting in significantly lower costs of education. The President encouraged Congress to support their effort to join the WICHE.

Executive Supplemental Budget Request

The President stated that there will be an approximate \$1.5 million supplemental request to cover essential needs. He stated the proposed legislation is still being finalized and will be sent over soon.

Final Preparations of the FY22 National Government Budget Submission

Finally, the President noted that the Executive is finalizing the FY22 budget proposal. He stated that the preliminary numbers have the submission at approximately \$85 million balanced with the projected available revenue. He praised the past work of Congress to bring in so much domestic revenue, citing that only \$2.7 million of the budget is Compact funding. He went on to encourage Congress to continue to pass legislation aimed at boosting domestic revenue, such as tax reforms.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 21-17

RE: COMMITTEE TO WAIT ON THE PRESIDENT

March 23, 2021

Conclusion

On behalf of the Committee, Chairman Perman thanked the President for his hospitality in hosting the meeting. The Committee stated that it would share the President's agenda with members of Congress. The meeting concluded with mutual agreement to move forward on the above issues in a timely and cooperative manner.

The Committee is submitting a brief report at this time. The Committee kindly requests that members of Congress address any further questions regarding this report to the members of the Committee during discussion of this report at session.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Ferny S. Perman
Ferny S. Perman, Chairman

/s/ Isaac V. Figir
Isaac V. Figir, Member

/s/ Aren B. Palik
Aren B. Palik, Member

/s/ Derensio S. Konman
Derensio S. Konman, Member