

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 17-43

RE: C.R. NO. 17-27/EDUCATION

SUBJECT: CONFIRMING THE NOMINEE DR. RUFINO MAURICIO TO THE  
POSITION OF SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE  
FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

SEPTEMBER 22, 2011

The Honorable Isaac V. Figir  
Speaker, Seventeenth Congress  
Federated States of Micronesia  
Second Regular Session 2011

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Education, to which was referred C.R. No. 17-27, entitled:

"A RESOLUTION TO CONFIRM THE NOMINATION OF DR. RUFINO MAURICIO TO THE POSITION OF SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA.",

begs leave to report as follows:

Your Committee recognizes the importance of the education of our children as they represent the future welfare and progress of our country. The Secretary of the Department of Education of the National Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, as the highest national leadership position working with issues relating to education, is an enormously important post.

In order to ensure a quality education for each student the policies and administration of the National Department of Education must be developed, implemented and maintained by an efficient and skilled administration. This administration must, in turn, be led by a Secretary who is a strong, competent individual, one with great personal integrity. It would be in the best interests our country if the individual in this position had many years of experience in school administration and leadership at the National

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level, as well as, an in-depth knowledge of relevant policy issues.

Your Committee held a hearing with the staff of the Department of Education, including the Acting Secretary of the Department Education on August 3, 2011. The hearing with the nominee followed on September 14, 2011. The staff of the Department of Education are familiar with the nominee and express their general support for him. An initial concern was raised regarding the previous Secretary of Education being related to the nominee. However, staff of the Department of Education confirmed this relationship played no part in the nomination process.

Your Committee asked the Acting Secretary if the Department suggested this nominee or if the President had put forth the nomination on his own. The Acting Secretary stated that the Department had been consulted, but the nominee was suggested by the President.

The Acting Secretary emphasized that the nominee was very qualified to lead the Department of Education because he is an able administrator with National and international experience. Further, the nominee is well respected and has a deep understanding of our culture, which would be vital in his leadership role. The staff of the Department of Education stated that the fact the nominee has a Ph.D. degree commands respect in the education field.

Several of your Committee's members questioned the nominee's lack of school administrative experience. The Acting Secretary emphasized again that management skills and respect were important in the position of Secretary, and that the nominee already had an understanding of the position and has ideas of how to move the Department forward.

Further, many members of the staff are career-long education specialists working under specific policy mandates and need only effective management. The feeling of the Department of Education is that they need a leader who is effective as the face of the Department, one who is able to work effectively with the President, and organizations such as the U.S. Office of Insular Affairs, in order for the Department to

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have the respect it deserves and ensure it receives all the monetary and technical support it can.

The nominee received a Doctorate in Anthropology from the University of Oregon in 1993. He did course work in Hawaii, New York and Oregon over a period of twenty years in order to complete his studies. Upon returning from the U.S. the nominee became the Executive Director of the Micronesian Endowment for Historic Preservation in 1994, then in 2003 was named the Assistant Secretary for the Department of Health, Education and Social Affairs. Since February of 2008 the nominee has been the Director of the Office of National Archives, Cultural & Historic Preservation. The nominee has executed his duties in all prior positions satisfactorily.

On September 14, 2011, the confirmation hearing process continued with the nominee. Prior to the hearing, Chairman Urusemal had forwarded an extensive list of questions to the nominee regarding the five national strategic goals for education. As a part of the Nominee's initial statement he thanked the Congress for an opportunity move forward in the confirmation process and stated that he welcomed this opportunity as a way to serve the Nation in a larger, more encompassing role. He emphasized that he had already had several meetings with the staff of the Department of Education and they appear well trained and efficient.

If confirmed the nominee stated he would continue the work under the strategic goals for education, as well as, further initiatives with the U.S. Office of Insular Affairs, and relevant national and international organizations. He stated he looked forward to a good working relationship with the Congress and the Executive, and would welcome their guidance.

The nominee stated he had already had meetings with the staff of NDOE regarding the five strategic goals, and he went on to answer the over twenty specific questions for the Committee regarding those current goals. In general, the nominee was in favor of adhering to the activities based on the strategic goals, however, he is mindful of always considering our cultural identity and the reality of the economic constraints of our country in the implementation of

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these goals. Your Committee the believes nominee understands the programs and inner working of the Department of Education.

At several points during the hearing the nominee was asked what the optimal size of the Department should be. Specifically Senator Welly wondered if there was some duplication of jobs, and whether some positions might be transferred to the states. To all of these questions the Nominee stated it was too early to tell, but if confirmed he would do a job audit immediately.

In answering questions posed by Senator Simina the nominee again reiterated that while activities like standardized testing were in theory good they had a cultural and economic bias. The nominee stated that while all were in favor of academic improvement, completely absorbing western standards did have a negative impact on traditional culture. This the nominee admitted was a difficult area.

Further, the nominee stated he would dedicate himself to pressing questions such as how to support standards for teacher certification and accreditation, while not eliminating long serving professionals. The Nominee agreed that laying off teachers seemed shortsighted in a climate where there is a teacher shortage.

Other areas discussed included: funding and criteria for scholarships; collaboration between College of Micronesia-FSM and the staff of the Department of Education; private school funding; and retention of college graduates in the Federated States of Micronesia.

The final question Chairman Urusemal asked the nominee to give a short list of areas he believed needed attention and work. The nominee listed three top priorities: 1) resource management, in particular the long-term planning as Compact funding decreases; 2) the National Department of Education's relationship with the state departments of education; and 3) the accreditation and certification standards.

The nominee has extraordinary academic credentials and has served our National government successfully in his previous positions. It was apparent to your Committee in his

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confirmation hearing that the nominee has worked to familiarize himself with Department of Education since his nomination and has a genuine desire to further the education of our children.

Your Committee made inquiries to all of the states through their governors regarding the qualifications and ethics of the nominee. All responses where the governor had personal knowledge of the nominee were positive.

Your Committee has not received any subsequent communication from any individual or organization that would cast doubt on the performance or integrity of this nominee. Further, your Committee defers to the President and the Department as to the decision to put forward this nominee. Absent any contrary indication, your Committee believes this nominee should be confirmed, and so recommends that Dr. Rufino Mauricio be confirmed to the position of Secretary of the Department of Education of the National Government of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Your Committee on Education is in accord with the intent and purpose of C.R. No. 17-27, and recommends its adoption in the form attached hereto.

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Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Joseph J. Urusemal  
Joseph J. Urusemal, chairman

/s/ Bonsiano F. Nethon  
Bonsiano F. Nethon, member

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

/s/ Tony H. Otto  
Tony H. Otto, member

/s/ Dohsis Halbert  
Dohsis Halbert, member

Wesley W. Simina, member

/s/ Paliknoa K. Welly  
Paliknoa K. Welly, member