

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 23-02

RE: COMMITTEE TO WAIT ON THE PRESIDENT

JULY 12, 2023

The Honorable Esmond B. Moses
Speaker, Twenty Third Congress
Federated States of Micronesia
First Special Session, 2023

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee to Wait on the President was duly appointed on July 11, 2023, consisting of members Joseph J. Urusemal, Merlynn Abello-Alfonos, Perpetua S. Konman and Paliknoa K. Welly. Joseph J. Urusemal was designated as the Chairman. The meeting with the President and Vice President took place on July 11, 2023 at noon. The Chairman thanked the President and the key members of the Executive branch on behalf of Congress for the opportunity to meet. The Chairman reported that Congress was in session and was ready to transact business. The Committee communicated the priorities of Congress for this session, and it received an agenda and a detailed status report regarding several matters of importance to our Nation from the President.

The President requested that the amendment to the law regarding the JCRP negotiation team be reviewed for action as soon as possible. As there remains some final issues surrounding the 2023 Amended Compact and education regarding the changes it will bring, it would be appropriate to have JCRP available to assist with these remaining items.

The resolution to ratify the 2023 Amended Compact is with the Congress, and the President requests this be reviewed and acted upon this session. Additional legislation to amend the number of JEMCO members and Compact Trust Fund members under the 2023 Amended Compact have also been transmitted.

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As the State and National Leadership Conference took place after the transmission of the resolution to ratify the 2023 Amended Compact the President stated that it is the will of that body to have the State governments ratify the 2023 Amended Compact, as well as, continuing for our National Government to complete its ratification process. All action regarding this matter should be done with as much speed as possible. It was hoped by leadership that the ratification process will be completed by the end of July. All of our Nation's State and National leaders are acutely aware of the necessity to complete the FSM internal process quickly in order to make the transition to the 2023 Amended Compact as seamless as possible. The President will be calling for a meeting with the governors regarding the distribution formula between the States and National Governments in conjunction with this process.

The President will be transmitting a supplemental budget bill this week, and anticipates that this will be for approximately \$3 million. The available unappropriated revenue is above \$6 million and it is hope that the Congress will assist the Executive branch with some urgent needs at the end of this fiscal year.

The special election has resulted in some outstanding issues. Candidates from Kosrae and Chuuk have been certified by the Election Commission. However, there are issues regarding the results of the constitutional amendments in the referendum in the State of Chuuk. There has been a lawsuit filed regarding those results in the State of Chuuk. The President stated that the Department of Justice has been requested to assist the Election Commission in this matter.

The President will be transmitting the revised FY24 budget within the coming weeks. It is his hope that several questions regarding revenue available for the coming fiscal year will be resolved prior to September. The President stated that the revised FY24 budget will be available well before the September regular session.

It is also requested by the President that action be taken on nominations that have been transmitted to Congress, many of

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which are for overseas missions in the Department of Foreign Affairs. Action on legislation to amend the remaining travel restrictions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic is also requested. This is in order to be in line with other nations and resume normal travel. Finally, the President requests that some funding be appropriated for disaster relief for Typhoon Mawar for Guam.

Your Committee requested information on the previously appropriated \$9.5 million for settlement of the PII case. The Committee was advised a detailed report will be transmitted to Congress regarding the new administration's investigation into this issue. The Vice President also stated that the FY22 audit is being finalized and will reflect the correct status of all funds appropriated for the settlement of the PII case.

Additional discussion was held regarding: 1) the FSM census and the possibility of including those FSM citizens residing overseas, 2) the new higher fares by United Airlines for the island hopper, 3) FSM not being eligible for FEMA disaster relief assistance unless at least one member in a household is a U.S. citizen, 4) the continue ban on workers from the PI, and 5) the need for domestic FSM transportation to have a permanent set schedule.

In closing the President advised your Committee he had completed his first state visit to Pohnpei State and intended to visit the other three States before the end of the fiscal year.

As your Committee will be supplementing this report during the discussing of this meeting with the President it has endeavored to make this report complete, and requests that Members address any additional revisions or questions during the discussion of the report on the floor of Congress.

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Respectfully submitted,

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

/s/ Merlynn Abello-Alfonso
Merlynn Abello-Alfonso, member

/s/ Perpetua S. Konman
Perpetua S. Konman, member

Paliknoa K. Welly, member