



**RALPH DLG. TORRES**  
Governor

**VICTOR B. HOCOG**  
Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH of the NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

**05 JAN 2018**

The Honorable Rafael S. Demapan  
Speaker, House of Representatives  
Twentieth Northern Marianas  
Commonwealth Legislature  
Saipan, MP 96950

The Honorable Arnold I. Palacios  
Senate President, The Senate  
Twentieth Northern Marianas  
Commonwealth Legislature  
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. Speaker and Mr. President:

This is to inform you that I have signed into law House Bill No. 20-09, entitled, "To require all scuba dive shop operators to impose a \$10.00 surcharge per tank usage to purchase, install, operate, and maintain decompression chambers in the CNMI; and for other purposes.", which was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Twentieth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

This bill becomes **Public Law No. 20-36**. Copies bearing my signature are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ralph DLG. Torres", written over a circular stamp or watermark.

**RALPH DLG. TORRES**

cc: Lt. Governor; Press Secretary; Attorney General's Office; Secretary, Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation; Tinian Health Care; Rota Health Care; Department of Finance; Public Auditor; Special Assistant for Administration; Special Assistant for Programs and Legislative Review



## *House of Representatives*

20<sup>th</sup> NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 500586  
SAIPAN, MP 96950

November 29, 2017

The Honorable Ralph DLG. Torres  
Governor  
Commonwealth of the Northern  
Mariana Islands  
Capitol Hill  
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Governor Torres:

I have the honor of transmitting herewith for your action **H. B. No. 20-9**, entitled: "To require all scuba dive shop operators to impose a \$10.00 surcharge per tank usage to purchase, install, operate, and maintain decompression chambers in the CNMI; and for other purposes.", which was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Twentieth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "L. Muña", enclosed within a circular blue ink scribble.

Linda B. Muña  
House Clerk

Attachment



*Twentieth Legislature  
of the  
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands*

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**First Regular Session**

**January 31, 2017**

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPH LEEPAN T. GUERRERO of Saipan, Precinct 1 (*for himself*, Representatives Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao, Joseph P. Deleon Guerrero, Jose I. Itibus, and Edwin K. Propst,) in an open and public meeting with an opportunity for the public to comment, introduced the following Bill:

**H. B. No. 20-9**

**AN ACT**

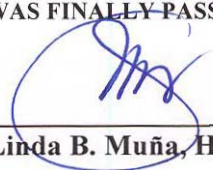
**TO REQUIRE ALL SCUBA DIVE SHOP OPERATORS TO IMPOSE A \$10.00 SURCHARGE PER TANK USAGE TO PURCHASE, INSTALL, OPERATE, AND MAINTAIN DECOMPRESSION CHAMBERS IN THE CNMI; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

The Bill was referred to the House Committee on Commerce and Tourism, which submitted Standing Committee Report No. 20-6; adopted 4/3/17.

**THE BILL WAS PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON  
FIRST AND FINAL READING, APRIL 4, 2017;  
*without amendments* and transmitted to the  
THE SENATE.**

The Bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Fiscal Affairs.  
**THE BILL WAS PASSED BY THE SENATE ON FIRST AND FINAL READING, NOVEMBER 21, 2017;  
*without amendments and was returned to*  
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.**

**THE BILL WAS FINALLY PASSED ON APRIL 4, 2017.**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Linda B. Muña, House Clerk



*Twentieth Legislature  
of the  
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands*  
**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

FIRST DAY, FIRST SPECIAL SESSION

APRIL 4, 2017

---

---

**H. B. NO. 20-9**

**AN ACT**

**TO REQUIRE ALL SCUBA DIVE SHOP OPERATORS TO IMPOSE A \$10.00 SURCHARGE PER TANK USAGE TO PURCHASE, INSTALL, OPERATE, AND MAINTAIN DECOMPRESSION CHAMBERS IN THE CNMI; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

**Be it enacted by the Twentieth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature:**

1           Section 1. Findings and Purpose. The CNMI is home to some of the most pristine  
2 and exquisite diving spots in the Pacific. Every year, tourists from different areas of the  
3 world come to the CNMI to explore the beautiful sandy beaches and the extravagant  
4 underwater life that we have to offer. Scuba diving, an exceptional method of exploring  
5 aquatic life, has proven to be a popular recreational activity for tourists visiting the CNMI.

6           The Legislature finds that in order to perpetuate our tourism industry, the CNMI must  
7 insure that tourists will be protected from certain and uncertain instabilities. With the addition  
8 of decompression chambers, tourists will feel safe knowing that they will be properly treated  
9 if decompression sickness were to occur.

HOUSE BILL NO. 20-9

---

1           The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands lacks a decompression chamber.  
2           All treatments of patients requiring the aid of a decompression chamber would have to be  
3           referred to Guam. Additionally, decompression chambers can also be used to treat other  
4           illnesses, such as carbon monoxide poisoning, bacterial and radiation illnesses, and most  
5           especially diabetes. The intent of this Act is to impose a surcharge fee that will be deposited  
6           into a special account for the purchase, installation, and the operation and maintenance of a  
7           decompression chamber at the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation, the Tinian Health  
8           Center, and the Rota Health Center.

9           **Section 2. Amendment.** Title 3, Division 5, Chapter 6 of the Commonwealth Code  
10          is hereby amended by adding the following provisions:

11                 **“§5612. Surcharge Fee.** All scuba dive shop operators shall impose an  
12                 additional \$10.00 surcharge per tank usage for the services provided by the operators.  
13                 The operators shall collect and document all the fees collected and the fees shall be  
14                 remitted to the Department of Finance in accordance with timeline reporting  
15                 deadlines, procedures, and forms provided by regulation by the Department of  
16                 Finance.

17                 **§5613. Special Accounts.** The Secretary of Finance shall establish a special  
18                 account, Decompression Chamber Fund, and shall deposit into the account all  
19                 surcharge fees collected by all scuba dive shop operators pursuant to this Act without  
20                 further appropriations.

21                 **§5614. Expenditure Authorities.** The CEO of the Commonwealth Healthcare  
22                 Corporation shall be the expenditure authority of the funds deposited in the

HOUSE BILL NO. 20-9

---

---


1           Decompression Chamber Fund Account. All funds in the account shall be used solely  
2           for the purchase, installation, operation and maintenance of the decompression  
3           chamber and related supplies and materials for the First, Second, and Third Senatorial  
4           District after the effective date of this Act.”

5           **Section 3. Severability.** If any provisions of this Act or the application of any such  
6           provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent  
7           jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or  
8           circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.

9           **Section 4. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not be  
10          construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under statutes  
11          repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the statutes. Repealers  
12          contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under or pursuant to prior law.  
13          The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of terminating, or in any way modifying,  
14          any liability, civil or criminal, which shall already be in existence on the date this Act  
15          becomes effective.


HOUSE BILL No. 20-9

1           **Section 5. Effective Date.** This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the  
2 Governor, or its becoming law without such approval.

Attested to by:   
Linda B. Muña, House Clerk

Certified by:   
SPEAKER RAFAEL S. DEMAPAN  
House of Representatives  
20<sup>th</sup> Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature

Approved this 5<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2018

  
RALPH DLG. TORRES  
Governor  
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands