

A LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE

To propose a constitutional amendment to update the legislative budget ceiling to provide sufficient funding for an effective and independent legislative branch supported by professional and technical staff and appropriate resources, and guarantee an equitable distribution of funds for the personal staff and offices of each member of the legislature, so that each can function properly as an independent representative elected by the people.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE TENTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:

1 Section 1. Legislative Initiative. Pursuant to Article XVIII, Section 3 of the
2 Commonwealth Constitution, the Tenth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature, by the
3 affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members of each house present and voting, hereby
4 proposes the following amendment to the Constitution to be placed before the people for
5 ratification in the next regular general election as provided in Article XVIII, Section 5 of the
6 Commonwealth Constitution:

7 "A PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT
8

9 To amend Article II, Section 16 of the Commonwealth Constitution to
10 update the legislative budget ceiling to provide sufficient funding for an
11 effective and independent legislative branch supported by professional
12 and technical staff and appropriate resources, and guarantee an equitable
13 distribution of funds for the personal staff and offices of each member of
14 the legislature, so that each can function properly as an independent
15 representative elected by the people.

16 I. Article II, Section 16 is amended to read:

17 Section 16. Budget Ceiling. There shall be a ceiling on the budget of the
18 legislature.

19 a) Appropriations, or obligations and expenditures, ~~exclusive of the~~
20 ~~salaries of the members of the legislature,~~ for the operations and activities of the
21 legislature and legislative bureau, other than the salaries of members of the
22 legislature, any payments required by law to be made as an employer
23 contribution to any Commonwealth government retirement fund, and major

1 equipment or capital improvement projects, may not exceed two million eight
2 hundred thousand dollars in any fiscal year the budget ceiling provided in this
3 section.

4 b) Each member of each house shall receive an equal amount within
5 this ceiling not to exceed one hundred fifty-five thousand dollars annually for
6 office and related expenses including all expenses for travel. Members may
7 voluntarily pool all or any part of these funds.

8 c) The presiding officer in each house shall receive within this ceiling
9 an additional amount not to exceed four hundred thousand dollars a year to
10 support the operations and activities of that house, to be expended according to
11 the rules of that house. A portion of such amount shall be equally distributed to
12 the standing committees of that house for their operations and activities.

13 d) The legislative bureau shall have a budget of not more than two
14 million dollars, for the purposes specified in section 17. The Bureau may not
15 purchase, rent, or lease vehicles for the use of individual members of the
16 legislature or their offices. The Bureau may not defray travel expenses of
17 individual members of the legislature or their personal staff except as approved
18 by joint resolution of the legislature. The term 'major equipment or capital
19 improvement projects' in subsection (a) does not include the purchase, rental, or
20 lease of vehicles for the use of individual members of the legislature or their
21 offices.

22 e) Beginning the second Monday of January 1998, the amount of the
23 ceiling and all other dollar amounts stated in this section shall be adjusted every
24 two years by the same percentage as the percentage change in the United States
25 Department of Commerce composite price index during the two preceding
26 fiscal years using the beginning of fiscal year 1996 as the base.

27 f) No part of the appropriations for the legislature or the legislative
28 bureau, other than a member's salary, may be used for personal or political
29 activities.

30 g) Obligations and expenditures for the operations and activities of the
31 legislature for the period October 1 through the second Monday in January of a
32 fiscal year in which there is a regular general election may not exceed seven
33 hundred thousand dollars or twenty five percent of the annual spending
34 authority otherwise available provided by law consistent with this section. This

1 ceiling shall apply to the various offices and activities in the same proportions
2 as the annual spending authority provided by law consistent with this section.


3 II. Repealer.

4 Subsection (f) of Section 17 of Article II of the Commonwealth
5 Constitution is repealed."

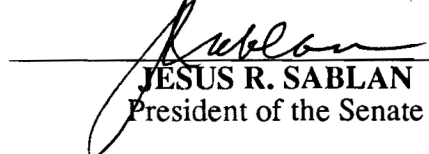
6 Section 2. Adoption and Transmittal. The President of the Senate and the Speaker of
7 the House shall certify, and the Clerks of the Senate and House shall attest to the adoption of
8 this Legislative Initiative by the affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members of each house
9 present and voting. The House Clerk shall then cause the Initiative to be transmitted to the
10 Governor and the Board of Elections. Pursuant to Article XVIII, Section 5 of the
11 Commonwealth Constitution, the Board shall place this Legislative Initiative before the people
12 of the Commonwealth for a ratification vote in the next regular general election (November 1,
13 1997).

**Passed by the House of Representatives on September 19, 1997 and the
Senate on September 17, 1997, with the affirmative vote of three-fourths (3/4)
of the members of each house present and voting.**

CERTIFIED BY:




DIEGO T. BENAVENTE
Speaker of the House

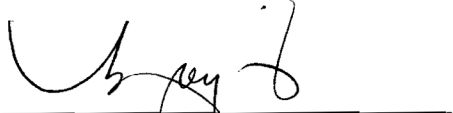


JESUS R. SABLAN
President of the Senate

ATTESTED BY:



EVELYN C. FLEMING
House Clerk



NICOLASA B. BORJA
Senate Clerk