

**The original documents are located in Box 41, folder “1976/03/24 HJR549 Northern Mariana Islands-Commonwealth Status (1)” of the White House Records Office:
Legislation Case Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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APPROVED

MAR 24 1976

*Ceremony in East Room &
Statement issued 3/24/76
Remarks at Ceremony issued 3/24/76*

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
March 24, 1976

ACTION

Last Day: March 27

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

JIM CANNON

SUBJECT:

H.J. Res. 549 - Northern
Mariana Islands -- Commonwealth Status

*To Archives
3/25/76*

Attached for your consideration is H.J. Res. 549, sponsored by Representative Burton and twenty-four others, which approves the "Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America."

A detailed discussion of the enrolled bill is provided in OMB's enrolled bill report at Tab A.

OMB, Max Friedersdorf, Jack Marsh, Counsel's Office (Lazarus), NSC and I recommend approval of the enrolled bill and the proposed signing statement which has been cleared by Bob Hartmann.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign H.J. Res. 549 at Tab B.

That you approve the signing statement at Tab C.

Approve MCJ Disapprove _____





EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

MAR 19 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Enrolled Bill H. J. Res. 549 - Northern
Mariana Islands -- Commonwealth status
Sponsors - Rep. Burton (D) California and
24 others

Last Day for Action

March 27, 1976 - Saturday

Purpose

Approves the "Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth
of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union
with the United States of America."

Agency Recommendations

Office of Management and Budget	Approval
Department of the Interior	Approval
Office for Micronesia Status Negotiations	Approval (Signing State- ment attached)
Department of Defense	Approval (Informally)
Department of State	Approval
Department of Justice	Approval
National Security Council	Approval

Discussion

The Northern Marianas consist of 21 small islands which together with Guam (an unincorporated U.S. territory) form the western Pacific island group known as the Mariana Islands. Some 14,500 people inhabit the Northern Marianas and this archipelago plus the Carolines and the Marshall Islands constitute the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands or as it is popularly known, Micronesia, a United Nations strategic trusteeship under United States administration. Under the U.N. Trusteeship Agreement, the United States: (1) has maintained military

facilities in Micronesia for preserving peace and international security while (2) being responsible for furthering Micronesian political, economic, and social development toward self-government and/or independence in accordance with the will of the peoples concerned. Largely because of cultural and language differences, Micronesia presently is subdivided into six administrative districts of which the Northern Marianas is one.

The United States policy concerning any new status for Micronesia initially was to strive for a single new status for the entire Trust Territory rather than to conduct separate status discussions with any of the individual districts. In the early 1970's, when it became increasingly clear that most of the Micronesian negotiators were striving for a less close future relationship with the United States, the Northern Mariana District requested and the United States agreed to initiate separate status negotiations with them. Since the very beginning of the U.N. Trusteeship Agreement, the people of the Northern Marianas repeatedly have expressed a strong desire for a close political relationship with the United States, and in light of the continuing uncertainty concerning the other Micronesian districts' future status, separate status negotiations were agreed upon.

Accordingly, in 1972, the President's Personal Representative for Micronesian Status Negotiations, Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, commenced the Marianas' Status Talks which were concluded in February of 1975 with the signing of the "Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America." The Covenant's ten Articles are briefly outlined below:

- I. Political Relationship, upon termination of the Trusteeship Agreement, to be a self-governing Commonwealth under the sovereignty of the United States which will have complete responsibility for and authority over foreign affairs and defense matters.

- II. Constitution to be locally formulated to provide for a republican form of government similar to that of United States.
- III. United States Citizenship to be conferred on those qualified Marianans desiring it, at the time the Presidential Proclamation to terminate the Trusteeship Agreement is promulgated.
- IV. Judicial Authority to be divided between the judiciary established by the Northern Mariana Constitution and a U.S. District Court which will be part of the same U.S. judicial circuit as Guam.
- V. Applicability of Laws of the United States, including specific sections of the U.S. Constitution, certain specific laws itemized in the Covenant, including Section 228 of Title II and Title XVI of the Social Security Act as it applies to the several States, and other laws as enacted by the Congress pursuant to recommendations by a Commission on Federal Laws required by Section 504 of the Covenant.
- VI. Revenue and Taxation provisions apply United States income taxes as a territorial tax and customs duties, but the Northern Marianas Government may levy additional taxes. The Northern Marianas will not be included within the Customs Territory of the United States. Taxes and duties will be rebated for use by the Northern Marianas Government.
- VII. U. S. Financial Assistance in the form of direct grants of \$14 million each year for seven years for government operations, capital improvement projects, and economic developments; to be adjusted to reflect changes in Gross National Product Implicit Price Deflation and to be continued after

the original seven years at the same levels unless otherwise provided by Congress. In addition, the Northern Marianas will receive the full range of Federal programs and services which are available to the territories of the United States.

- VIII. Trust Territory Property to be transferred to the Government of the Northern Marianas; United States to hold a five-year option to lease for up to one hundred years, 17,799 acres on Tinian Island together with various other sites to enable it to carry out its defense responsibilities upon payment of \$19,250,000.
- IX. Representation for the Northern Marianas provided by a Resident Representative to the United States if provided for by the Northern Marianas' constitution or law.
- X. Effective Dates provide for a phasing in of the provisions with (a) some becoming effective upon approval of the Covenant by the United States, (b) others within 180 days after approval by the United States of the Northern Mariana constitution, and (c) the rest upon the termination of the U.N. Trusteeship Agreement and the establishment of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The above cited Covenant was presented, as required, for approval by the people of the Northern Marianas in a plebiscite called by the United States with United Nations Trusteeship Council observers, on June 17, 1975. Of the registered voters, 95 percent participated, and of those who voted, 78.8 percent voted in favor of the Covenant. Subsequently, on July 1, 1975, you transmitted the Covenant to Congress and requested prompt and favorable consideration of the measure.

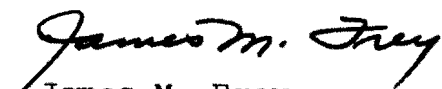
H. J. Res. 549, as enrolled, is identical to the Covenant you submitted to Congress last year except



that the Senate added a new section 2 which expresses the sense of Congress that it supports the consultation procedure contained in section 902 of the Covenant.

In its letter on H. J. Res. 549, Interior reflected the general position taken by all the Executive Branch agencies making recommendations on the enrolled bill when it stated that:

"Presidential approval of H. J. Res. 549 as enrolled will represent one more important step toward fulfillment of the obligations which the United States undertook when the Congress approved, by joint resolution, the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement on July 18, 1947. The Covenant, as approved by the Congress, represents the freely expressed wish of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands, and will enable them to move toward their long sought goal of self-government in political union with the United States."



James M. Frey
Assistant Director for
Legislative Reference

Enclosure



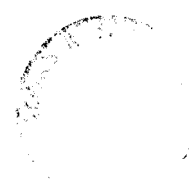
STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I am signing today an historic document -- H.J. Res. 549, the Joint Resolution of the Congress approving the Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Covenant.

It is an important occasion. First, it is a significant step in carrying out our obligations under the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement which has been the basis of the United States' administration of these islands since 1947. Second, it confirms our national commitment to the principle of self-determination by honoring the freely expressed wishes of the peoples of these islands for political union with the United States. And third, the joining together of all of the Marianas under one flag and one common citizenship represents the first major addition to United States territory in the Pacific since 1898.

History will show that this action has been in clear response to the persistent desires of the Marianas people to become permanently associated with the United States -- a desire recorded formally through resolutions, referendums and petitions to the United Nations and to the United States dating as far back as 1950. History will also show that the negotiations leading to the Covenant were conducted in an open and highly democratic fashion, and that the Covenant's provisions are responsive to the wishes of both the people of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Congress of the United States.

Those who were involved in this careful and thorough process are to be congratulated: The Marianas Political Status Commission; Ambassador Haydn Williams and members of the American Delegation; those members of the Congress



who worked closely with Ambassador Williams during the negotiations; and those who provided the leadership in moving the joint resolution through its final stages in the House and the Senate. I refer to the members of the Senate and House Interior Committees including Senator J. Bennett Johnston, Senator Paul J. Fannin, Senator Clifford P. Hansen, Chairman James Haley, Congressman Phil Burton, Congressman Joe Skubitz and Congressman William M. Ketchum.

The decision to approve the Covenant was not taken lightly by either the people of the Northern Mariana Islands or by the Congress of the United States. Its provisions and the significance of the islands becoming a part of the United States were subjected to careful scrutiny and weeks and months of debate in the Marianas and in Washington. The plebiscite of last June was conducted in a fair and impartial manner under the able supervision of Mr. Erwin D. Canham, the Plebiscite Commissioner. U.N. observers were also present. The final plebiscite vote, with 95% of those eligible to vote casting their ballots, was a resounding 78.8% popular approval of the Covenant. Following months of open hearings the final vote in the House and Senate resulted in equally impressive majorities in favor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America.

Next will come the challenge of planning carefully and well for the new government of the Northern Marianas under its own locally drawn and ratified Constitution. The framers of that Constitution will draw on our 200 years of experience as an independent democracy, and those residents of the

Northern Marianas who will one day be citizens of the United States will receive the full protection of our Bill of Rights which protects the rights of all American citizens.

As I sign this Bill, I cannot help but remember that these islands were once the scene of bitter armed conflict. My hope now is that they will contribute to the continuing maintenance of peace and stability and growing cooperation and friendship among all of the peoples and nations of the Western Pacific.

Finally, to the peoples of the Northern Marianas, I extend to you on this historic day my personal greetings and my best wishes as you move progressively closer to your long-sought goal of self-government within the political framework of the American family. Your entrance into union with the United States is warmly welcomed in this our bicentennial year.

Ronald R. Ford

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
UPON SIGNING H.J. RES. 549
THE MARIANAS COVENANT

THE EAST ROOM

3:14 P.M. EST

Distinguished representatives of the Northern Marianas, distinguished Members of the Congress, members of the Executive Branch, ladies and gentlemen:

The signing today of the joint resolution of the Congress providing the Northern Marianas Islands Commonwealth Covenant marks a very important moment in our nation's history. It reaffirms our commitment to the principles of self-determination, and it honors the freely expressed wishes of the peoples of these islands for the political union with the United States.

Those wishes have been recorded formally through the resolutions, referendums and petitions to the United Nations and to the United States, dating as far back as 1950. We can be proud of the fact that open democratic negotiations led to the Covenant. The plebiscite conducted on the islands last June resulted in a resounding 78.8 percent popular approval of the Covenant. The final vote in the House and Senate reflected equally impressive majorities.

I congratulate all those involved in the process-- the Marianas Political Status Commission, Ambassador Haydn Williams, members of the American delegation, and those Members of the Congress who worked very closely with Ambassador Williams during the negotiations.

Let me also thank the distinguished Members, past as well as present, of the House and Senate Interior Committees, particularly Senator Bennett Johnston, Cliff Hansen, Chairman James Haley, Congressmen Phil Burton, Joe Skubitz and Bill Ketchum.

To the people of the Northern Marianas I extend my personal greetings and my best wishes as you move closer to your goal of self-government within the political framework of the American family.

MORE

Page 2

I warmly welcome your eventual entrance into the union with the United States, and as I sign this bill, we might recall that these islands were once the scene of bitter armed conflict. My hope now is that they will contribute to the continuing maintenance of peace and stability and friendship among all the peoples in all of the nations in the Western Pacific.

Thank you all very much for coming. I can't say enough for the cooperation that came from not only the people of the Northern Marianas, but the Congress and all others associated, and to you, Ambassador Williams, we owe a great debt of gratitude.

END (AT 3:18 P.M. EST)

MARCH 24, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I am signing today an historic document -- H.J. Res. 549, the Joint Resolution of the Congress approving the Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Covenant.

It is an important occasion. First, it is a significant step in carrying out our obligations under the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement which has been the basis of the United States' administration of these islands since 1947. Second, it confirms our national commitment to the principle of self-determination by honoring the freely expressed wishes of the peoples of these islands for political union with the United States. And third, the joining together of all of the Marianas under one flag and one common citizenship represents the first major addition to United States territory in the Pacific since 1898.

History will show that this action has been in clear response to the persistent desires of the Marianas people to become permanently associated with the United States -- a desire recorded formally through resolutions, referendums and petitions to the United Nations and to the United States dating as far back as 1950. History will also show that the negotiations leading to the Covenant were conducted in an open and highly democratic fashion, and that the Covenant's provisions are responsive to the wishes of both the people of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Congress of the United States.

Those who were involved in this careful and thorough process are to be congratulated: The Marianas Political Status Commission; Ambassador Haydn Williams and members of the American Delegation; those members of the Congress who worked closely with Ambassador Williams during the negotiations; and those who provided the leadership in moving the joint resolution through its final stages in the House and the Senate. I refer to the members of the Senate and House Interior Committees including Senator J. Bennett Johnston, Senator Paul J. Fannin, Senator Clifford P. Hansen, Chairman James Haley, Congressman Phil Burton, Congressman Joe Skubitz and Congressman William M. Ketchum.

The decision to approve the Covenant was not taken lightly by either the people of the Northern Mariana Islands or by the Congress of the United States. Its provisions and the significance of the islands becoming a part of the United States were subjected to careful scrutiny and weeks and months of debate in the Marianas and in Washington. The plebiscite of last June was conducted in a fair and impartial manner under the able supervision of Mr. Erwin D. Canham, the Plebiscite Commissioner. U.N. observers were also present. The final plebiscite vote, with 95% of those

more


eligible to vote casting their ballots, was a resounding 78.8% popular approval of the Covenant. Following months of open hearings the final vote in the House and Senate resulted in equally impressive majorities in favor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America.

Next will come the challenge of planning carefully and well for the new government of the Northern Marianas under its own locally drawn and ratified Constitution. The framers of that Constitution will draw on our 200 years of experience as an independent democracy, and those residents of the Northern Marianas who will one day be citizens of the United States will receive the full protection of our Bill of Rights which protects the rights of all American citizens.

As I sign this Bill, I cannot help but remember that these islands were once the scene of bitter armed conflict. My hope now is that they will contribute to the continuing maintenance of peace and stability and growing cooperation and friendship among all of the peoples and nations of the Western Pacific.

Finally, to the peoples of the Northern Marianas, I extend to you on this historic day my personal greetings and my best wishes as you move progressively closer to your long-sought goal of self-government within the political framework of the American family. Your entrance into union with the United States is warmly welcomed in this our bicentennial year.

#



To
Cavanaugh
3-19-76



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

MAR 19 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Enrolled Bill H. J. Res. 549 - Northern Mariana Islands -- Commonwealth status
Sponsors - Rep. Burton (D) California and 24 others

Last Day for Action

March 27, 1976 - Saturday

Purpose

Approves the "Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America."

Agency Recommendations

Office of Management and Budget	Approval
Department of the Interior	Approval
Office for Micronesia Status Negotiations	Approval (Signing Statement attached)
Department of Defense	Approval (Informally)
Department of State	Approval
Department of Justice	Approval
National Security Council	Approval

Discussion

The Northern Marianas consist of 21 small islands which together with Guam (an unincorporated U.S. territory) form the western Pacific island group known as the Mariana Islands. Some 14,500 people inhabit the Northern Marianas and this archipelago plus the Carolines and the Marshall Islands constitute the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands or as it is popularly known, Micronesia, a United Nations strategic trusteeship under United States administration. Under the U.N. Trusteeship Agreement, the United States: (1) has maintained military





EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

DATE: 3-22-76

TO: Bob Linder

FROM: Jim Frey

Attached is the Defense views
letter on HJRes 549. Please
have it included in the
enrolled bill file.

OMB FORM 38
REV AUG 73



GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

19 March 1976

Honorable James T. Lynn
Director, Office of Management
and Budget
Washington, D. C. 20503

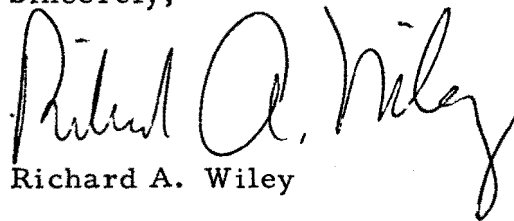
Dear Mr. Lynn:

This is in response to your request for the views of the Department of Defense on the enrolled enactment of H. J. Res. 549, 94th Congress, "To approve the 'Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America', and for other purposes."

The covenant to establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas in political union with the United States clearly supports this Nation's national security interests and defense posture in the Western Pacific.

The Department of Defense recommends that the President approve H. J. Res. 549, in which the Congress expresses its approval of the covenant.

Sincerely,


Richard A. Wiley

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I am signing today, a historic document. H.J. Res. 549,
~~I welcome you here today to witness an historic~~

event -- the ~~signing~~ of the Joint Resolution of the Congress approving the Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Covenant.

It is an important occasion. First, it is a significant step in carrying out our obligations under the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement which has been the basis of the United States' administration of these islands since 1947. Second, it confirms our national commitment to the principle of self-determination by honoring the freely expressed wishes of the peoples of these islands for political union with the United States. And third, the joining together of all of the Marianas under one flag and one common citizenship represents the first major addition to United States territory in the Pacific since 1898.

History will show that this action has been in clear response to the persistent desires of the Marianas people to become permanently associated with the United States -- a desire ~~which has been~~ recorded formally through resolutions, referendums and petitions to the United Nations and to the United ^{States} ~~Nations~~ dating as far back as 1950. History will also show that the negotiations leading to the Covenant were conducted in an open and highly democratic fashion, and that the Covenant's provisions ~~were~~ ^{are} responsive to the wishes of both the people of

the Northern Mariana Islands and the Congress of the United States.

Those who were involved in this careful and thorough process are to be congratulated: The Marianas Political Status Commission; Ambassador Haydn Williams and members of the American Delegation; those members of the Congress who worked closely with Ambassador Williams during the negotiations; and those who provided the leadership in moving the joint resolution through its final stages in the House and the Senate. I refer to the members of the Senate and House Interior Committees ~~and in particular to~~ ^{including} Senator J. Bennett Johnston of ~~Louisiana~~ ^{and Senator} ~~and Representative Phillip Burton of California.~~ ^{Chairman John W. Pickens, Cong. Phil Keeton, Cong. Joe Stubby and Cong. Bill Helms} ^{Cofford}

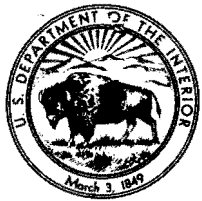
The decision to approve the Covenant was not taken lightly by either the people of the Northern Mariana Islands or by the Congress of the United States. Its provisions and the significance of the islands becoming a part of the United States were subjected to careful scrutiny and weeks and months of debate in the Marianas and in Washington. The ~~United Nations-observed~~ plebiscite of last June was conducted in a fair and impartial manner under the able supervision of Mr. Erwin D. Canham, the Plebiscite ^{VN observers were also present} Commissioner. The final plebiscite vote, with 95% of those eligible to vote casting their ballots, was a resounding 78.8% popular approval of the Covenant. Following months of open hearings the final vote in the House and Senate resulted in equally impressive

majorities in favor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America.

Next ^{will come} ~~comes~~ the challenge of planning carefully and well for the new government of the Northern Marianas under its own locally drawn and ratified Constitution. The framers of that Constitution will draw on our 200 years of experience as an independent democracy, and those residents of the Northern Marianas who will one day be citizens of the United States ~~can be assured that they will receive the~~ full protection of our Bill of Rights which protects the rights of all American citizens.

As I sign this Bill, I cannot help but remember that these islands were once the scene of bitter armed conflict. My hope now is that they will contribute to the continuing maintenance of peace and stability and growing cooperation and friendship among all of the peoples and nations of the Western Pacific.

Finally, to the peoples of the Northern Marianas, I extend to you on this historic day my personal greetings and my best wishes as you move progressively closer to your long-sought goal of self-government within the political framework of the American family. Your entrance into union with the United States is warmly welcomed in this our bicentennial year.



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

MAR 15 1976

Dear Mr. Lynn:

This responds to your request for our views on the enrolled bill H.J. Res. 549, "To approve the 'Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States.'"

We strongly recommend that the President approve the enrolled bill.

On July 1, 1975, the President submitted to both Houses of Congress for their approval a "Joint Resolution Approving the 'Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America.'" As enrolled, H.J. Res. 549 is the Joint Resolution and the Covenant as transmitted by the President.

On June 17, 1975, the people of the Northern Mariana Islands voted in a plebiscite to approve the Commonwealth status as set forth in the Covenant. This plebiscite represented the capstone to more than twenty years of local efforts by the people of the Northern Mariana Islands to become a permanent part of the United States.

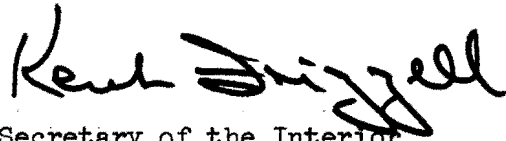
The Covenant Agreement in H.J. Res. 549 was signed on February 15, 1975, by the Marianas Political Status Commission for the Northern Mariana Islands, and by Ambassador F. Haydn Williams for the United States. It is the result of more than two years of negotiations between the United States and a broadly representative delegation from the Northern Mariana Islands.

Because of our responsibilities in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, this Department has had an important role in the Marianas Commonwealth negotiations. Representatives of this Department were on the U.S. Delegation for the Marianas negotiations from the opening round in December 1972, and provided policy assistance on Interior Department matters.



Presidential approval of H.J. Res. 549 as enrolled will represent one more important step toward fulfillment of the obligations which the United States undertook when the Congress approved, by joint resolution, the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement on July 18, 1947. The Covenant, as approved by the Congress, represents the freely expressed wish of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands, and will enable them to move toward their long sought goal of self-government in political union with the United States.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kent D. Swartzell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "K" and "S".

Acting Secretary of the Interior

Honorable James T. Lynn
Director, Office of
Management and Budget
Washington, D.C. 20503



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

MAR 16 1976
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Honorable James T. Lynn
Director,
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, D. C. 20503

Dear Mr. Lynn:

This is in response to Mr. James M. Frey's March 12, 1976 request for the Department's views and recommendations on enrolled bill H.J. Resolution 549, to approve the "Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America", and for other purposes.

The Department has testified in favor of this legislation and strongly approves of this enactment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert J. McCloskey".

Robert J. McCloskey
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20530

March 17, 1976

Honorable James T. Lynn
Director
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Mr. Lynn:

In compliance with your request, I have examined a facsimile of the enrolled bill H.J. Res. 549, 94th Cong., 2d Sess., To approve the "Covenant To Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America," and for other purposes.

Section 1 of the Joint Resolution would approve the Covenant to establish the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. This part of the Joint Resolution was introduced into Congress in response to President Ford's letters to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate of July 1, 1975, 11 Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents 695. At the time of the introduction of the Joint Resolution the Department of Justice commented in favor of the Joint Resolution not only because it was introduced at the request of the President but also in view of its own involvement in the drafting of the Covenant. Since then, in a letter dated January 19, 1976, addressed to Senator Percy, the Attorney General stated that the Department of Justice is satisfied that the Covenant "is consistent with our constitutional system and our international obligations, and, above all, that it deals fairly with the interests of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands."

The Joint Resolution as originally introduced in the House of Representatives, contained two additional sections. The Department of Justice deferred to the views of other directly involved agencies with respect to the first one and was opposed to the other one. Those two sections were deleted by the Senate.

The Senate added a new section 2 to the Joint Resolution which expresses the sense of Congress that it supports the consultation procedure contained in section 902 of the Covenant. We perceive no objection to that provision.

The Department of Justice recommends Executive approval of the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Michael M. Uhlmann". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Michael M. Uhlmann
Assistant Attorney General
Office of Legislative Affairs

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

March 15, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: JAMES M. FREY

FROM: JEANNE W. DAVIS *WJD*

SUBJECT: *for* NSC Recommendation on
HJ Resolution 549

The NSC concurs in HJ Resolution 549 "to establish a commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in political union with the United States and for other purposes."

The NSC recommends that the President sign HJ Resolution 549.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 22, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: JIM CAVANAUGH
FROM: MAX L. FRIEDERSDORF *M.L.F.*
SUBJECT: H. J. Res. 549 - Northern Mariana Islands
Commonwealth Status

The Office of Legislative Affairs concurs with the agencies
that the subject bill be signed.

Attachments

THE WHITE HOUSE

ACTION MEMORANDUM

WASHINGTON

LOG NO.:

Date: March 19

Time: 600pm

FOR ACTION: George Humphreys
Max Friedersdorf
Ken Lazarus
Jack Marsh
Robert Hartmann (signing statement attached)

cc (for information): Jim Cavanaugh
Ed Schmults
Rogers Morton

NSC/S

FROM THE STAFF SECRETARY

DUE: Date: March 22

Time: 300pm

SUBJECT:

H.J. Res. 549 - Northern Mariana Islands
Commonwealth Status

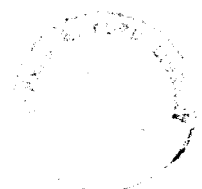
ACTION REQUESTED:

- For Necessary Action
- For Your Recommendations
- Prepare Agenda and Brief
- Draft Reply
- For Your Comments
- Draft Remarks

REMARKS:

Please return to Judy Johnston, Ground Floor West Wing

No objection -- Ken Lazarus 3/22/76



PLEASE ATTACH THIS COPY TO MATERIAL SUBMITTED.

If you have any questions or if you anticipate a delay in submitting the required material, please telephone the Staff Secretary immediately.

James M. Cannon
For the President

THE WHITE HOUSE

ACTION MEMORANDUM

WASHINGTON

LOG NO.:

Date: March 19

Time: 600pm

FOR ACTION:

George Humphreys ✓
 Max Friedersdorf
 Ken Lazarus
 Jack Marsh
 Robert Hartmann (signing statement attached)

cc (for information):

Jim Cavanaugh
 Ed Schmultz
 Rogers Morton

NSC/S

FROM THE STAFF SECRETARY

DUE: Date: March 22

Time: 300pm

SUBJECT:

H.J. Res. 549 - Northern Mariana Islands
 Commonwealth Status

ACTION REQUESTED:

For Necessary Action

For Your Recommendations

Prepare Agenda and Brief

Draft Reply

For Your Comments

Draft Remarks

REMARKS:

Please return to Judy Johnston, Ground Floor West Wing

I Concur. 3/22/76
Geo Humphreys

PLEASE ATTACH THIS COPY TO MATERIAL SUBMITTED.

If you have any questions or if you anticipate a delay in submitting the required material, please telephone the Staff Secretary immediately.

James M. Cannon
 For the President

THE WHITE HOUSE

ACTION MEMORANDUM

WASHINGTON

LOG NO.:

Date: March 19

Time: 600pm

FOR ACTION: George Humphreys
Max Friedersdorf
Ken Lazarus
Jack Marsh

cc (for information):
NSC/S

Jim Cavanaugh
Ed Schmults
Rogers Morton

Robert Hartmann (signing statement attached)

FROM THE STAFF SECRETARY

DUE: Date: March 22

Time: 300pm

SUBJECT:

3/19 - 6:18 pm

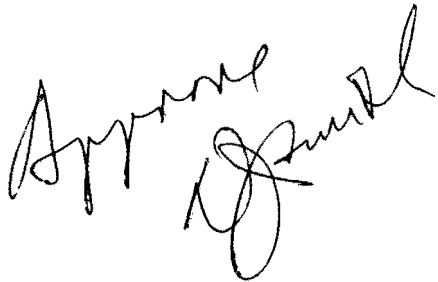
H.J. Res. 549 - Northern Mariana Islands
Commonwealth Status

ACTION REQUESTED:

- For Necessary Action
- For Your Recommendations
- Prepare Agenda and Brief
- Draft Reply
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- Draft Remarks

REMARKS:

Please return to Judy Johnston, Ground Floor West Wing



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James M. Cannon
For the President

OFFICE FOR MICRONESIAN STATUS NEGOTIATIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

March 15, 1975

James M. Frey
Assistant Director for
Legislative Reference
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Mr. Frey:

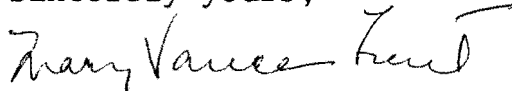
Your office has asked our views and recommendations on HJR 549, as amended, to approve the "Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America, and for other purposes". The resolution would act to extend the approval by the United States of the political status agreement earlier negotiated with representatives of the Northern Mariana Islands and overwhelmingly approved by the people of the Northern Mariana Islands in a plebiscite observed by the United Nations Trusteeship Council. Upon termination of the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands the Northern Mariana Islands would become a territory of the United States as set forth in the Commonwealth Covenant.

On July 1, 1975, the President personally transmitted the Commonwealth Covenant to the United States Congress for its consideration. The President urged that "...the Senate and the House take early, positive action to approve the Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Covenant which will thereupon become law in accordance with its provisions. Favorable consideration by the Congress will represent one more important step in the fulfillment of its obligations which the United States undertook when the Congress approved by joint resolution the Trusteeship Agreement on July 18, 1947. Congressional approval of the freely expressed wish of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands will enable them to move toward their long sought goal of self-government in political union with the United States. The final realization of this desired goal will be an historic event for the people of the Northern Mariana Islands and for the United States--an event to which I look forward with great pleasure."

The Congress has now responded positively to the President's request by enactment of the enrolled bill.

We strongly recommend the President approve the legislation. We believe the Covenant follows the best traditions of this nation and approval would be in the national interest.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Vance Trent". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Mary Vance Trent
Acting Director

AdeG:kkc

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I welcome you here today to witness an historic event -- the signing of the Joint Resolution of the Congress approving the Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Covenant.

It is an important occasion. First, it is a significant step in carrying out our obligations under the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement which has been the basis of the United States' administration of these islands since 1947. Second, it confirms our national commitment to the principle of self-determination by honoring the freely expressed wishes of the peoples of these islands for political union with the United States. And third, the joining together of all of the Marianas under one flag and one common citizenship represents the first major addition to United States territory in the Pacific since 1898.

History will show that this action has been in clear response to the persistent desires of the Marianas people to become permanently associated with the United States -- a desire which has been recorded formally through resolutions, referendums and petitions to the United Nations and to the United Nations dating as far back as 1950. History will also show that the negotiations leading to the Covenant were conducted in an open and highly democratic fashion, and that the Covenant's provisions were responsive to the wishes of both the people of

the Northern Mariana Islands and the Congress of the United States.

Those who were involved in this careful and thorough process are to be congratulated: The Marianas Political Status Commission; Ambassador Haydn Williams and members of the American Delegation; those members of the Congress who worked closely with Ambassador Williams during the negotiations; and those who provided the leadership in moving the joint resolution through its final stages in the House and the Senate. I refer to the members of the Senate and House Interior Committees and in particular to Senator J. Bennett Johnston of Louisiana, and Representative Phillip Burton of California.

The decision to approve the Covenant was not taken lightly by either the people of the Northern Mariana Islands or by the Congress of the United States. Its provisions and the significance of the islands becoming a part of the United States were subjected to careful scrutiny and weeks and months of debate in the Marianas and in Washington. The United Nations-observed plebiscite of last June was conducted in a fair and impartial manner under the able supervision of Mr. Erwin D. Canham, the Plebiscite Commissioner. The final plebiscite vote, with 95% of those eligible to vote casting their ballots, was a resounding 78.8% popular approval of the Covenant. Following months of open hearings the final vote in the House and Senate resulted in equally impressive

majorities in favor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America.

Next comes the challenge of planning carefully and well for the new government of the Northern Marianas under its own locally drawn and ratified Constitution. The framers of that Constitution will draw on our 200 years of experience as an independent democracy, and those residents of the Northern Marianas who will one day be citizens of the United States can be assured that they will receive the full protection of our Bill of Rights which protects the rights of all American citizens.

As I sign this Bill, I cannot help but remember that these islands were once the scene of bitter armed conflict. My hope now is that they will contribute to the continuing maintenance of peace and stability and growing cooperation and friendship among all of the peoples and nations of the Western Pacific.

Finally, to the peoples of the Northern Marianas, I extend to you on this historic day my personal greetings and my best wishes as you move progressively closer to your long-sought goal of self-government within the political framework of the American family. Your entrance into union with the United States is warmly welcomed in this our bicentennial year.

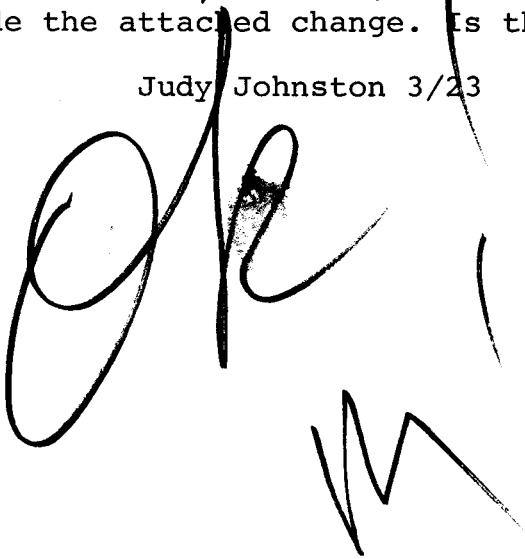
THE WHITE HOUSE

March , 1976

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Jack Marsh: in response to your
comment on the Northern Mariana
Islands statement, Bob Wolthius
has made the attached change. Is this
o.k.

Judy Johnston 3/23

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Judy Johnston', is written over the typed name and date. The signature is highly cursive and loops around the text.

ACTION MEMORANDUM

WASHINGTON

LOG NO.: *dec 3/22*
3.00

Date: March 19

Time: 600pm

FOR ACTION: George Humphreys
Max Friedersdorf
Ken Lazarus
Jack Marsh ✓
Robert Hartmann (signing statement attached)

cc (for information):
NSC/S

Jim Cavanaugh
Ed Schmults
Rogers Morton

FROM THE STAFF SECRETARY

DUE: Date: March 22

Time: 300pm

SUBJECT:

H.J. Res. 549 - Northern Mariana Islands
Commonwealth Status

ACTION REQUESTED:

- For Necessary Action
- For Your Recommendations
- Prepare Agenda and Brief
- Draft Reply
- For Your Comments
- Draft Remarks

REMARKS:

Please return to Judy Johnston, Ground Floor West Wing

*Concern, but in statement pg 2
mention Senate & House mainly
the members as well as Johnston &
Benton.*

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James M. Cannon
For the President

the Northern Mariana Islands and the Congress of the United States.

Those who were involved in this careful and thorough process are to be congratulated: The Marianas Political Status Commission; Ambassador Haydn Williams and members of the American Delegation; those members of the Congress who worked closely with Ambassador Williams during the negotiations; and those who provided the leadership in moving the joint resolution through its final stages in the House and the Senate. I refer

to the members of the Senate and House Interior Committees ^{including} ~~and in particular to~~ Senator J. Bennett Johnston of Louisiana ^{and Senator Paul J. Cannon of California} and Representative Phillip

~~Eastman of California.~~ ^{Chairman Jim Harkin, Cong Phil Burton, Cong Joe Shubly and Cong Bill Idelberger}

The decision to approve the Covenant was not taken lightly by either the people of the Northern Mariana Islands or by the Congress of the United States. Its provisions and the significance of the islands becoming a part of the United States were subjected to careful scrutiny and weeks and months of debate in the Marianas and in Washington. The United Nations-observed plebiscite of last June was conducted in a fair and impartial manner under the able supervision of Mr. Erwin D. Canham, the Plebiscite Commissioner. The final plebiscite vote, with 95% of those eligible to vote casting their ballots, was a resounding 78.8% popular approval of the Covenant. Following months of open hearings the final vote in the House and Senate resulted in equally impressive

PRESIDENTIAL TALKING POINTS AT SIGNING OF MARIANAS COVENANT,
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 1976

The signing today of the Joint Resolution of the Congress approving the Northern Marianas Islands Commonwealth Covenant marks an important moment in our Nation's history. It reaffirms our commitment to the principle of self-determination. And it honors the freely expressed wishes of the peoples of these islands for political union with the United States.

Those wishes have been recorded formally through resolutions, referendums and petitions to the United Nations and to the United States, dating as far back as 1950.

We can be proud of the fact that open, democratic negotiations led to the Covenant.

The plebiscite, conducted in the Islands last June, resulted in a resounding 78.8 percent popular approval of the Covenant. Following months of open hearings, the final vote in the House and Senate reflected equally impressive majorities.

I congratulate all those involved in this process: the Marianas Political Status Commission, Ambassador Haydn Williams and members of the American Delegation and the distinguished members of the Senate and House (Interior) Committees concerned here with us today.

To the people of the Northern Marianas, I extend my personal greetings and my best wishes as you move closer to your goal of self-government within the political framework of the American family. I warmly welcome your eventual entrance into union with the United States.

As I sign this Bill, we might recall that these islands were once the scene of bitter armed conflict. My hope now is that they will contribute to the continuing maintenance of peace, stability, and friendship among all of the people and nations of the Western Pacific.

#

ACTION MEMORANDUM

WASHINGTON

LOG NO.: *dec 3/22*
3:00

Date: March 19

Time: 600pm

FOR ACTION: George Humphreys
Max Friedersdorf
Ken Lazarus
Jack Marsh ✓
Robert Hartmann (signing statement attached)

cc (for information): Jim Cavanaugh
Ed Schmults
Rogers Morton

NSC/S

FROM THE STAFF SECRETARY

DUE: Date: March 22

Time: 300pm

SUBJECT:

H.J. Res. 549 - Northern Mariana Islands
Commonwealth Status

ACTION REQUESTED:

- For Necessary Action
- For Your Recommendations
- Prepare Agenda and Brief
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*Concern, but in statement pg 2
mention Senate & House mainly
by members as well as Johnston &
Benton.*

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James M. Cannon
For the President



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

DATE: 3-22-76

TO: Bob Linder

FROM: Jim Frey

Attached is the Defense views letter on HJRes 549. Please have it included in the enrolled bill file.



GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

19 March 1976

Honorable James T. Lynn
Director, Office of Management
and Budget
Washington, D. C. 20503

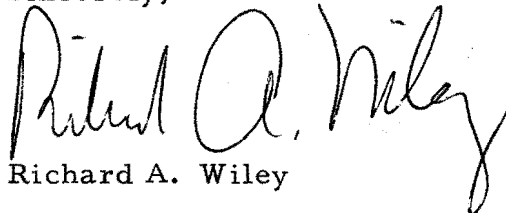
Dear Mr. Lynn:

This is in response to your request for the views of the Department of Defense on the enrolled enactment of H. J. Res. 549, 94th Congress, "To approve the 'Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America', and for other purposes. "

The covenant to establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas in political union with the United States clearly supports this Nation's national security interests and defense posture in the Western Pacific.

The Department of Defense recommends that the President approve H. J. Res. 549, in which the Congress expresses its approval of the covenant.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Richard A. Wiley".

Richard A. Wiley

• NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

March 23, 1976

TO: JUDY JOHNSTON (WW)

FROM: JAY TAYLOR

Draft Statement for President Ford at

Marianas Covenant Signing

I welcome you here today to witness an historic event -- the signing of the Joint Resolution of the Congress approving the Northern Marianas Islands Commonwealth Covenant.

It is an important occasion. First, it is a significant step in carrying out our obligations under the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement which has been the basis of the United States' administration of these islands since 1947. Second, it confirms our national commitment to the principle of self-determination by honoring the freely expressed wishes of the peoples of these islands for political union with the United States. And third, it represents the joining of all of the Marianas under one flag and one common citizenship for the first time since 1898.

History will show that this action has been in clear response to the persistent desires of the Marianas people to become permanently associated with the United States -- a desire recorded formally through resolutions, referendums and petitions to the U.N. and to the U.S. dating as far back as 1950. History will also show that open and highly democratic negotiations led to the Covenant, and that the Covenant's provisions are responsive to the wishes of both the people of the Northern Marianas Islands and the Congress of the United States.

I congratulate all those involved in this careful and thorough process; the Marianas Political Status Commission; Ambassador Haydn Williams and members of the American Delegation; those members of the Congress who worked closely with Ambassador Williams during

the negotiations and those who provided the leadership in moving the joint resolution through its final stages in the House and the Senate. I refer to the members of the Senate and House Interior Committees and in particular to Senator J. Bennett Johnston of Louisiana, and Representative Phillip Burton of California.

Neither the people of the Northern Marianas Islands nor the Congress of the United States took lightly the decision to approve the Covenant. There was careful scrutiny and weeks and months of debate in the Marianas and in Washington on its provisions and the significance of the islands becoming a part of the United States. The plebiscite of last June was conducted in a fair and impartial manner under the able supervision of Mr. Erwin D. Canham, the Plebiscite Commissioner. U.N. observers were also present. The final plebiscite vote, with 95 percent of those eligible to vote casting their ballots, was a resounding 78.8 percent popular approval of the Covenant. Following months of open hearings the final vote in the House and Senate resulted in equally impressive majorities in favor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands in Political Union with the United States of America.

Next comes the challenge of planning carefully and well for the new government of the Northern Marianas under its own locally drawn and ratified Constitution. The framers of that Constitution will draw on our 200 years of experience as an independent democracy, and those residents of the Northern Marianas who will one day be citizens of the

United States will receive the full protection of our Bill of Rights which protects all American citizens.

As I sign this Bill, I cannot help but remember that these islands were once the scene of bitter armed conflict. My hope now is that they will contribute to the continuing maintenance of peace and stability and growing cooperation and friendship among all of the peoples and nations of the Western Pacific.

Finally, to the peoples of the Northern Marianas I extend to you on this historic day my personal greetings and my best wishes as you move progressively closer to your long-sought goal of self-government within the political framework of the American family. I warmly welcome your eventual entrance into union with the United States in this our bicentennial year.

DRAFT STATEMENT FOR PRESIDENT FORD AT
MARIANAS COVENANT SIGNING

I welcome you here today to witness an historic event-- the signing of the Joint Resolution of the Congress approving the Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Covenant.

It is an important occasion. First, it is a significant step in carrying out our obligations under the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement which has been the basis of the United States' administration of these islands since 1947. Second, it confirms our national commitment to the principle of self-determination by honoring the freely expressed wishes of the peoples of these islands for political union with the United States. And third, ^{it represents} the joining together of all of the Marianas under one flag and one common citizenship ~~for the first time~~ represents the first major addition to United States territory in the Pacific since 1898.

History will show that this action has been in clear response to the persistent desires of the Marianas people to become permanently associated with the United States--a desire [which has been] recorded formally through resolutions, referendums and petitions to the U.N. and to the U.S. dating as far back as 1950. History will also show that ^{open and highly democratic} [the] negotiations ^{led} [leading] to the Covenant, [were] conducted in an open and highly democratic fashion, and that the Covenant's provisions ^{are} [were] responsive to the wishes of both the people of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Congress of the United States.

all
NP I congratulate ^{all} those
[those who were] involved in this careful and thorough process; [are to be congratulated:]

The Marianas Political Status Commission; Ambassador Haydn Williams and members of the American Delegation; those members of the Congress who worked closely with Ambassador Williams during the negotiations and those who provided the leadership in moving the joint resolution through its final stages in the House and the Senate. I refer to the members of the Senate and House Interior Committees and in particular to Senator J. Bennett Johnston of Louisiana, and Representative Phillip Burton of California.

The decision to approve the Covenant was not taken lightly by either ^{the people} the people of the Northern Mariana Islands ^{nor} ~~or by~~

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of debate in the Marianas and in Washington ^{on}. The United Nations-observed plebiscite of last June was conducted in a

fair and impartial manner under the able supervision of ^{and UN observers were present.}

Mr. Erwin D. Canham, the Plebiscite Commissioner. The final plebiscite vote, with 95% of those eligible to vote casting their ballots, was a resounding 78.8% popular approval of the Covenant. Following months of open hearings the final vote in the House and Senate resulted in equally impressive majorities in favor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America.

yes
yes

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As I sign this Bill, I cannot help but remember that these islands were once the scene of bitter armed conflict. My hope now is that they will contribute to the continuing maintenance of peace and stability and growing cooperation and friendship among all of the peoples and nations of the Western Pacific.

Finally, to the peoples of the Northern Marianas I extend to you on this historic day my personal greetings and my best wishes as you move progressively closer to your long-sought goal of self-government within the political framework of the American family. ^{eventual} Your entrance into union with the United States ~~is~~ warmly welcomed in this our bicentennial year.

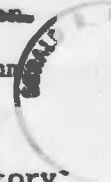
STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I am signing today an historic document, H.J. Res. 549,
~~I welcome you here today to witness an historic~~

event -- the signing of the Joint Resolution of the Congress approving the Northern Mariana Islands Commonwealth Covenant.

It is an important occasion. First, it is a significant step in carrying out our obligations under the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement which has been the basis of the United States' administration of these islands since 1947. Second, it confirms our national commitment to the principle of self-determination by honoring the freely expressed wishes of the peoples of these islands for political union with the United States. And third, the joining together of all of the Marianas under one flag and one common citizenship represents the first major addition to United States territory in the Pacific since 1898.

History will show that this action has been in clear response to the persistent desires of the Marianas people to become permanently associated with the United States -- a desire which ~~has been~~ recorded formally through resolutions, referendums and petitions to the United Nations and to the United ^{States} Nations dating as far back as 1950. History will also show that the negotiations leading to the Covenant were conducted in an open and highly democratic fashion, and that the Covenant's provisions ~~were~~ ^{are} responsive to the wishes of both the people of



the Northern Mariana Islands and the Congress of the United States.

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to the members of the Senate and House Interior Committees ^{including} ~~and in particular to~~ Senator J. Bennett Johnston of Louisiana ~~and Rep. ~~William~~ Phillips~~

~~of California.~~ ^{Chalmers James Haley, Cong. Phil Beulen, Cong. Joe Shubitz and Cong. Bill Kattamin}

The decision to approve the Covenant was not taken lightly by either the people of the Northern Mariana Islands or by the Congress of the United States. Its provisions and the significance of the islands becoming a part of the United States were subjected to careful scrutiny and weeks and months of debate in the Marianas and in Washington. The ~~United Nations observed~~ plebiscite of last June was conducted in a fair and impartial manner under the able supervision of Mr. Erwin D. Canham, the Plebiscite ^{UN observers were also present} Commissioner. The final plebiscite vote, with 95% of those eligible to vote casting their ballots, was a resounding 78.8% popular approval of the Covenant. Following months of open hearings the final vote in the House and Senate resulted in equally impressive

majorities in favor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America.

Next ^{will come} ~~comes~~ the challenge of planning carefully and well for the new government of the Northern Marianas under its own locally drawn and ratified Constitution. The framers of that Constitution will draw on our 200 years of experience as an independent democracy, and those residents of the Northern Marianas who will one day be citizens of the United States ~~can be assured that they~~ will receive the full protection of our Bill of Rights which protects the rights of all American citizens.

As I sign this Bill, I cannot help but remember that these islands were once the scene of bitter armed conflict. My hope now is that they will contribute to the continuing maintenance of peace and stability and growing cooperation and friendship among all of the peoples and nations of the Western Pacific.

Finally, to the peoples of the Northern Marianas, I extend to you on this historic day my personal greetings and my best wishes as you move progressively closer to your long-sought goal of self-government within the political framework of the American family. Your entrance into union with the United States is warmly welcomed in this our bicentennial year.

April 15, 1976

SUBJECT: Presidential action with regard to the establishment of the "Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands"

INFO FROM: Mary Trent and Mr. Adrian DeGraffenried, Office of Micronesian Status Negotiations (Interagency Group headed by the President's Personal Representative for Micronesian Status Negotiations - Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams) PHONE: 343-9143

Mr. James Berg, Office of Territorial Affairs (Interior) PHONE: 343-6973

1. On March 24, 1976, the President signed H.J. Res. 549, thereby approving the "Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America." (P.L. 94-241) NOTE: The Northern Mariana Islands currently make up one of the Districts of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (popularly known as Micronesia), which is administered by the United States as a result of the Trusteeship Agreement between the Security Council of the U.N. and the U.S.A.(1947).
2. The new constitution for the Northern Mariana Islands will be drawn up at a local constitutional convention. It will be submitted to the President on behalf of the Government of the United States, and will be deemed to have been approved six months after its submission unless earlier approved or disapproved (Section 202 of the Covenant). Procedure for the consideration of the constitution, including the question of to what extent, if any, Congress will be involved, has not yet been determined.
3. Within 180 days of the approval of the constitution the President will proclaim an effective date for the constitution and certain provisions of the Covenant (Section 1003(b)). The Secretary of the Interior will recommend a date to the President. However, if the President finds that the effectiveness of any of the provisions of the Mariana constitution would be inconsistent with the Trusteeship Agreement, he may declare them ineffective until the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement (Section 1004(b)).
4. Target date for completion of all actions described in #2 and #3 is January 1, 1978.
5. Section 1004(a) provides that the application of any provision of the Constitution or laws of the United States which would otherwise apply to the Northern Mariana Islands may be suspended until termination of the Trusteeship Agreement if the the President finds and declares that the application of such provision prior to termination would be inconsistent with the Trusteeship Agreement. This is intended to give the President some flexibility to prevent a law which otherwise might be made applicable by the formula set forth in Section 502 or otherwise, from being applicable if it would conflict with the international obligations which the U.S. undertook in the Trusteeship Agreement.

(Continued)

6. Interior, through its Office of Territorial Affairs, will be contacting the White House as to its recommendations for the President's appointments to the Commission on Federal Laws (Section 504). These recommendations are not expected to be made until 6-8 months from now (perhaps around November of 1976).
7. The President will issue a Proclamation announcing the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement and the establishment of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (Section 1002). The termination of the Trusteeship Agreement will affect all of the Districts of the Trust Territory, and negotiations with the other Districts as to what their political status will be after the Agreement is terminated is still continuing and not expected to be completed until 1981 or later. The Trusteeship Agreement will not be terminated until these negotiations have been completed, and the procedure by which the Agreement will be terminated has not yet been defined.