

**ADOPTED 2/28/06**

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 15-6**

**Date: February 23, 2006**

**RE: House Bill 15-28**

The Honorable Oscar M. Babauta  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Fifteenth Northern Marianas  
Commonwealth Legislature  
Capitol Hill  
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations to which House Bill No. 15-28 was referred, entitled:

To amend Section 2 of Public Law 14-87; and for other purposes,

begs leave to report as follows:

**I. RECOMMENDATION**

After considerable discussion and deliberation on the bill, the Committee recommends that the House pass House Bill No. 15-28.

## II. ANALYSIS

### A. Purpose

The purpose of House Bill No. 15-28 is to repeal the mandates established by Public Law 14-87 which requires (1) that all candidates of a recognized political party shall be listed consecutively on the ballot with all the other candidates of the same party and (2) that 1 CMC §6004 shall be effective at the next general election 2007 and thereafter.

### B. Committee Findings

The Committee finds that Public Law 14-87 amended 1 CMC §6004 to provide that all candidates of a recognized political party shall be listed consecutively on the ballot with all the other candidates of the same party, which is similar to the voting ballot used in the 2003 mid-term elections. Statistics show, however, that during the 2003 mid-term elections, the number of over votes was substantially higher when compared to the 2005 general election. The Committee finds that this is the result of the design of the ballots used.

Ballots used in the 2005 general election did not list all candidates of a recognized political party consecutively with the other candidates of the same party. The design of the ballots was based on a list of all candidates for a certain election district without regards to any political party affiliation. Because of the simplicity of this design, the percentage of valid votes of the 2005 general election was significantly higher than that of the 2003 mid-term election. It is, therefore, the Committee's position that the design of ballots used in the 2005 be maintained for its simplicity, which results in a higher rate of valid votes.

It is further found that Public Law 14-87 also provided that 1 CMC §6004 will become effective at the next mid-term elections in 2007 and thereafter. The Committee agrees with House Bill No 15-28 that this provision should also be repealed. The Committee also notes that comments received from the Commonwealth Election Commission supports the enactment of this legislation.

### C. Legislative History

House Bill 15-28 was introduced by Rep. Justo S. Quitugua and co-sponsored by Jacinta M. Kaipat and Jesus SN. Lizama on January 18, 2006 and was referred to the Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations for disposition.

