

October 5, 2009

Dear people of the Commonwealth,

These past three years, as both a concerned citizen and as a first-term member of the House of Representatives, I have sought to remain true to my commitments to push for greater transparency and accountability in government; to encourage active and informed public participation in government; to promote the frugal and prudent expenditure of public funds; to prioritize the basic needs and long-term interests of the community; and to assist in the creation of an enduring vision of good governance and prosperity for the Commonwealth.

Progress has been made on all these fronts, and there is still much more work to do. With respect to transparency and accountability, the popular initiative to apply the Open Government Act to the Legislature will finally be on this year's ballot. The initiative must now pass with 2/3 of the votes cast and counted in order to be enacted, and then the Legislature must adjust its rules and procedures accordingly. In addition, after months of hearings and briefings, the battle to uncover the sources and expenditures of public funds for the Governor's federalization litigation was finally won in both the CNMI Superior Court and the Supreme Court in favor of transparency -- but complete and up-to-date records are still to be obtained, and the experience has shed much light on ways to strengthen and clarify the Open Government Act in future legislation.

In terms of keeping the public informed and encouraging public involvement, I have sent out regular notices of House and Senate sessions, committee meetings, and public hearings as soon as they became available to my office. I have also made an effort to publicize as soon as possible House actions on bills, including our voting records and my reflections and reasons for voting as I did. In addition, in the last two years, public forums on the state of the legislature and CUC have been convened, as well as guided sunrise and sunset meetings to develop a long-term vision for the Commonwealth.

In light of the CNMI's severe fiscal problems, and believing that legislators must be advocates for fiscal prudence and lead by example, I have managed the public funds allocated to my office as frugally as possible. I drive my own car, answer my own phones, make my own appointments, write my own correspondence, and research and draft legislation in collaboration with the Legislative Bureau staff. Since coming into office in January 2008, I have spent, to date, a total of approximately \$615 of public funds for office operations, including office supplies and travel to Rota and Tinian on official business. I have further introduced legislation to establish stricter guidelines for expenditures from legislators' operational accounts; House Bill 16-266 is still pending review in the Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations.

In addition to House Bill 16-266, I have sponsored or co-sponsored the following legislation:

- **House Bill 16-79**, as originally drafted, to reverse the legislatively-imposed electric rate of 17 cents/kwh, in order to enable CUC to stabilize its financial condition;

- **House Bill 16-191**, the Commonwealth Emergency Relief Act, to provide clearer guidelines for the circumstances under which the Governor may declare a state of emergency;
- **House Bill 16-86**, the Resident Foreign National Act, to create a new 5-year CNMI immigration permit category for qualified long-term foreign workers, in order to liberalize and stabilize the CNMI's labor force;
- **House Bill 16-277**, to amend certain provisions of Public Law 15-108, the Commonwealth Employment Act, in order to protect the due process rights of workers affected by the Act;
- **House Bill 16-200**, to clarify and strengthen the Phosphate Detergent Act, and thereby better protect and enhance marine and groundwater quality;
- **House Bill 16-267**, to create a new Marpi Protected Area;
- **House Bill 16-274**, to clarify and strengthen the Litter Control Act, in order to improve enforcement of the Act for a cleaner and more healthful environment;
- **House Resolution 16-100**, in support of the proposed Beach Road Corridor Improvement Project;
- **House Bill 16-276**, to regulate the hours of operation of poker establishments;
- **House Resolution 16-9**, to amend the House rules in order to provide full and fair public notice of all House sessions and meetings, and to improve public access to legislative records; and
- **House Resolution 16-74**, to commence a special legislative investigation on allegations of public corruption against the Lt. Governor.

Legislation introduced by my colleagues that I have publicly supported and voted in favor of include: the Fiscal Year 2009 Appropriations Act (now Public Law 16-32); the Healthcare Corporation Act (House Bill 16-9, HS1); the Smoke Free Air (now Public Law 16-46); the CNMI Government and Public Deposit Safety Act (House Bill 16-4, HD4); the Attorney General Confirmation Act (Senate Bill 16-51, SD1); and legislative initiatives to prohibit the withdrawal of funds from the General Fund without appropriations made by law (House Legislative Initiative 16-11), to change the terms permitted for leaseholds on private lands from 55 to 75 years (House Legislative Initiative 16-4), and to prohibit any legislative increases in Retirement Fund benefits until all government obligations have been fully satisfied (House Legislative Initiative 16-13).

In addition, I have publicly supported the creation of a part-time and downsized legislature (House Legislative Initiative 16-7, still under review in committee); the establishment of a national marine monument in the Northern Marianas; the application of federal immigration and minimum wage laws in the CNMI; the adoption of a joint committee report rejecting the Governor's request for an appropriation of public funds to support his lawsuit against the federal government; and the extension of U.S. permanent residency status and a pathway to citizenship for immediate relatives of U.S. citizens and FAS citizens, CNMI permanent residents, and long-term foreign workers.

I have also publicly opposed and voted against bills that I thought were short-sighted, poorly-reviewed, duplicative, potentially harmful to the community, or wasteful. In particular, I have voted against bills promoting shooting resorts and gambling (House Bills 16-31, 16-82, and 16-225); resolutions that opposed the creation of a national

marine monument in the Northern Marianas; numerous appropriations for pet projects that were often passed the same day they were introduced with no fiscal analysis; and numerous bills, however nobly intended, that had been rushed to passage with little legislative review or public comment. I have further voted against the confirmations of board appointees for whom there had been no confirmation hearings, nor any formal vetting; and against major and questionable commercial public land leases to two corporations, both of which lacked proof of financing for their proposed developments.

As chair of the Saipan legislative delegation's Committee on Public Utilities & Infrastructure, I participate in the interagency CNMI Energy Steering Committee, which seeks to develop a comprehensive and sustainable energy plan for the CNMI. I have also coordinated legislative briefings with CUC on a range of issues, including the federal stipulated orders for water, wastewater, and used oil, and have commenced a preliminary oversight investigation on CUC in collaboration with the Office of the Public Auditor. An OPA report on performance audits of certain CUC contracts is expected to be completed in November, and discussions on legislation to improve long-term governance at CUC are ongoing, drawing on best practices for public utilities as well as lessons learned from past mistakes and continuing emergency declarations.

In the remaining months of my term as a member of the House, and for the next four years thereafter if elected to the Senate, my priorities are as follows:

- **To continue advocating for the passage of a balanced budget** that prioritizes the basic needs of the Commonwealth and the government's obligations to the Retirement Fund as well as its other debts;
- **To enact legislation to support and facilitate the restructuring and streamlining of local government**, working cooperatively with the Executive Branch and utilizing federally-funded technical assistance that is available for such purposes;
- **To improve local governance and create a more stable business environment** by systematically reviewing, clarifying, and updating enabling statutes and management structures for critical government agencies, beginning with CUC, and by strengthening and formalizing the legislative confirmation process;
- **To apply the Open Government Act to the Legislature**, and assist in the development of rules and procedures to ensure the Legislature's compliance with the law;
- **To continue advocating for the granting of U.S. permanent residency status** for immediate relatives of U.S. and FAS citizens, CNMI permanent residents, and long-term foreign workers, in order to keep families together and stabilize the local workforce;
- **To enact legislation to protect and enhance public health and the environment**, including the creation of a Marpi Protected Area, improved enforcement of the Litter Control Act, stricter prohibitions on the sale, use, manufacture, and importation of phosphate detergents, and the establishment of a simpler, more flexible zoning code that encourages orderly, sustainable development suited to the unique needs of our island community;

- **To enact legislation to support and facilitate the development and implementation of a comprehensive energy plan**, with the goal of creating a sustainable energy future for the CNMI;
- **To continue building a long-term vision for the Commonwealth**, and encouraging fresh, honest, and progressive citizens to enter into public service.

Over the next few weeks, from October 8 through November 5, 2009, I will be convening weekly public forums every Thursday evening from 6pm to 8pm in villages throughout Saipan to share my positions on the issues and goals for the next few years, to answer questions, and to listen to the concerns of the community. The first public forum will be held on Thursday, October 8, 2009, beginning at 6pm at the Kagman Community Center.

In addition, the Saipan Chamber of Commerce will be hosting a senatorial debate on Wednesday, October 21, 2009. I strongly encourage the public to attend and would welcome the opportunity to participate in additional senatorial debates hosted by other organizations as well.

These are serious and challenging times for us all. Our Commonwealth needs trustworthy and forward-thinking leadership as much as it needs caring, well-informed, and active citizens who will voice their concerns, hold public officials accountable, and get involved in the effort to make this community a better place to live and visit. For my own part, I remain committed to realizing our collective vision for a just, prosperous, and sustainable CNMI now and in the years to come.

For more information, to share questions and concerns, or to make arrangements for personal meetings with me, I can be reached by email at tinasablan@gmail.com , by phone at (670) 285-3935, on Facebook, and at www.tinasablan.com .

Sincerely,

/s/Christina-Marie (Tina) Sablan
Independent Candidate for Senate, Saipan
#5 on the Ballot