

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 22-03

RE: COMMITTEE TO WAIT ON THE PRESIDENT

SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

The Honorable Wesley W. Simina  
Speaker, Twenty-Second Congress  
Federated States of Micronesia  
Second Regular Session, 2021

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee to Wait on the President was duly appointed on July 19, 2021, consisting of members Ferny S. Perman, Joseph J. Urusemal, Aren B. Palik, and Florencio S. Harper. Senator Ferney S. Perman was designated as the Chairman.

The Committee met with the President on September 13, 2021, at approximately 12:30 p.m., virtually via Zoom, with Senator Ferny S. Perman present in person in Pohnpei and the other members and the President present via Zoom. The President welcomed those members of Congress present and thanked them for attending. Chairman Perman greeted the President and key members of the Executive Branch on behalf of Congress, and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet. Chairman Perman reported that Congress was in session and was ready to transact business.

The President began the substantive portion of the meeting by presenting an agenda of action items that the Executive Branch would like to see prioritized during this session and several topics for informational purposes. The President's agenda is as follows:

- Pending Nominations for Congressional Confirmation
- COVID-19 Update
- Supplemental Budget

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- Upcoming State Visits to Kosrae and Chuuk
- Pending Legislation
- Proposed Legislation on Cybercrimes
- Request to Extend the Tourism Sector Mitigation Fund
- Request to Appropriate \$2,000,000 to the Low-Income Household Program

The President began the meeting by requesting Congress extend the Resolution for the Emergency Declaration until the end of January 2022. He said that we will be dealing with COVID-19 for the foreseeable future and with this being the last scheduled session until next year, he asks Congress to extend the resolution through the January session.

Pending Nominations

The President then highlighted the nominations pending with Congress. These include: Elina Akinaga for Secretary of the Department of Resources and Development; Marcus Samo for Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Affairs; John Chugen for the National Election Commissioner in Yap; and Albert Falcam for FSM Social Security Board; and he mentioned several others that will be sent to Congress shortly. He encouraged Congress to take these nominees with positive consideration.

Chairman Perman clarified that Congress was not able to take up some of the previous nominees due to a shortage of members in the waning days of the last special session. He explained that is why there was a large number of resolutions asking the President to resubmit the nominees to Congress for consideration.

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COVID-19 Update

The President began the discussion by reporting that five individuals out of nineteen who were scheduled to arrive in Kosrae today (9/13/2021) tested positive for COVID-19 during quarantine in Guam and were not allowed to board. He also mentioned that ten people out of ninety-five scheduled to arrive in Pohnpei on September 16, 2019 have tested positive for COVID-19 during the quarantine process in Guam.

The President stated that the tentative dates for next repatriation flights to Kosrae are October 4<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>; for Yap are October 3<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>; for Pohnpei are September 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. He mentioned that the quarantine requirements in Guam have been extended from seven days to ten.

The President provided your Committee with the following vaccination rates:

61.1% of the FSM adult population is fully vaccinated.

In Kosrae, the amount of the adult population fully vaccinated is 69.4%

In Yap, the amount of the adult population fully vaccinated is 80.3%

In Pohnpei, the amount of the adult population fully vaccinated is 62.9%

In Chuuk, the amount of the adult population fully vaccinated is 53.7%

71.2% of the FSM adult population is partially vaccinated.

In Kosrae, the amount of the adult population partially vaccinated is 74.2%

In Yap, the amount of the adult population partially vaccinated is 84.4%

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In Pohnpei, the amount of the adult population partially vaccinated is 74.6%

In Chuuk, the amount of the adult population partially vaccinated is 64.9%

There was a general discussion about the vaccination rates, the amount of people actually in the respective states versus the 2010 census, the effectiveness of the vaccine to the Delta variant, concerns about those tested positive in Guam and what type of COVID-19 they had, booster shots, when the other states should expect to receive vaccines for individuals 12 and up, and concerns about continuing with the repatriation flights in light of the Delta Variant.

Supplemental Budget

The President stated that he will be sending over a request to reallocate funds in Section 8 of the FY 21 budget to cover a shortfall in Personnel and staff housing. He stated the total of the requested reallocation is approximately \$80,000. Therefore, it is not a request for supplemental funds to be added to the FY 21 budget rather it is a matter of moving already appropriated funds around.

Upcoming State Visits to Kosrae and Chuuk

The President stated that he is planning a state visit to Kosrae on September 20-24<sup>th</sup> and a trip to Chuuk around September 30<sup>th</sup> to attend the gubernatorial inauguration. He further stated that the JCRP may join him as well and brief the state leadership on their progress. This has yet to be finalized.

Pending Legislation

The President provided a list of important pending legislation that included bills addressing the following:

Cybercrimes; non-communicable diseases, passport extension, bunkering and provisioning, penalties for violating prohibited plastic materials, enhance the Secretary of

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Finance and Administration's tax enforcement capacity, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, safe release of sharks, maritime surveillance revolving fund, and fisheries policy.

The President highlighted the importance of the cybercrime legislation. He stated that Kiribati has already passed similar legislation and he spoke with them regarding its importance. He stated that while Congress initially funded the Cyber Crimes Unit with \$80,000, it may take as much as \$500,000 to fully fund that unit. The President stressed the importance of this legislation once again and asked Congress to take action.

The President also mentioned the legislation to enhance the Secretary of Finance and Administration's tax collection powers. He mentioned several initiatives that he has started and will pursue to enhance the tax collection rates as well, such as strengthening the enforcement of high-risk import businesses. He stated that this may not be a popular position, but it is in the best interest of the nation.

Request to Extend the Tourism Sector Mitigation Fund

The President asked that Congress extend the Tourism Sector Mitigation Fund until June 30, 2022. He reiterated that COVID-19 and its effects on the local economy will still be felt through next year, thus it is important to continue to help our local businesses.

Request to Appropriate \$2,000,000 to the Low-Income Household Program

The President reported that this program will help more than 6,000 households by the end of this month. He is asking Congress to appropriate \$2,000,000 to help reach an additional 2,000 households. He noted that he is aware of the inability of some citizens on the outer islands to apply and is withholding \$500,000, so that they will have an opportunity to apply to receive funds.

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Conclusion

On behalf of the Committee, Chairman Perman thanked the President. The Committee stated that it would share the President's agenda with members of Congress. The meeting concluded with mutual agreement to move forward on the above issues in a timely and cooperative manner.

The Committee kindly requests that members of Congress address any further questions regarding this report to the members of the Committee during discussion of this report at session.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Ferny S. Perman  
Ferny S. Perman, chairman

/s/ Joseph J. Urusemal  
Joseph J. Urusemal, member

/s/ Aren B. Palik  
Aren B. Palik, member

/s/ Florencio S. Harper  
Florencio Harper, member