

SIXTEENTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

SESSION, 2008

H. J. R. NO. 16-13

A HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

To respectfully inform the President of the United States that on behalf of the People of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands that the Sixteenth Commonwealth Legislature strongly opposes the creation of a Northern Islands National Monument.

1 WHEREAS, a Northern Islands National Monument encompassing the 200-mile
2 EEZ surrounding Uracas, Maug and Asuncion Islands is under consideration to be
3 designated as a marine sanctuary or monument; and

4 WHEREAS, a similar designation was given to islands north of Hawaii which is
5 now designated as the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument that was created
6 by President George W. Bush on June 15, 2006 under the 1906 Antiquities Act; and

7 WHEREAS, as expressed under Senate Joint Resolution No. 16-4, the designation
8 of the CNMI marine monument would be a permanent and nearly irrevocable federal
9 action that rightfully should require the consideration of the needs and opinions of the
10 People of the CNMI and the potential of lost opportunities for economic benefit to the
11 CNMI; and

12 WHEREAS, the designation of the CNMI marine monument will limit access to
13 these islands to researchers, tourists, or whoever else as determined by a federal agency,
14 which will serve to exclude a majority of the People of the CNMI and their descendants
15 from access to this area in perpetuity; and

16 WHEREAS, the issue of creating a CNMI national monument is highly
17 controversial, sensitive, and has been a source of divisiveness in our community as is
18 evident in our local and regional news media; and

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1 WHEREAS, it is the sense of the Legislature that the majority of its citizens do
2 not endorse this proposal; and

3 WHEREAS, the Governor of the CNMI has already responded to the PEW in a
4 letter dated March 19, 2008 and in a letter dated April 29, 2008 addressed directly to the
5 President of the United States respectfully declining the suggestion of designating any
6 marine sanctuary or monument in the Northern Mariana Islands; and

7 WHEREAS, in addition to letters from the Governor of the CNMI and Joint
8 Resolution No. 16-4 from the 16th CNMI Legislature, letters from the Mayor of Tinian
9 Jose P. San Nicolas, dated Jun 12, 2008; the Mayor of Saipan Juan B. Tudela, dated June
10 9, 2008; the Mayor of Rota Joseph S. Inos, dated July 15, 2008; the Mayor of the
11 Northern Islands Valentin I. Taisacan, dated June 6, 2008; and a joint letter from the
12 Speaker of the House and President of the Senate of the 16th CNMI Legislature dated
13 August 6, 2008 have been sent to the President of the United States further opposing the
14 creation of any marine sanctuary or monument; and

15 WHEREAS, the CNMI Constitution has already specifically identified the islands
16 of Uracas, Maug and Asuncion as wildlife conservation areas with the waters surrounding
17 them already acting as *de-facto* Marine Protected Areas, accessible only upon satisfaction
18 of conditions determined by the People of the CNMI; and

19 WHEREAS, the islands of Uracas, Maug and Asuncion are presently in pristine
20 condition and its surrounding waters support a healthy and vibrant ecosystem without
21 needing the "full protection" of a federal designation; and

22 WHEREAS, the People of the CNMI have a strong affinity with these islands and
23 its surrounding waters, and have a deep sense of its connection to the culture, traditions
24 and the unique identity of their people; and

25 WHEREAS, a unilateral designation of this area as a marine monument under the
26 Antiquities Act without the consent of the people of the Commonwealth of the Northern
27 Mariana Islands would be an affront and an insult to the People, especially to the
28 indigenous people of the CNMI; now, therefore,

29 BE IT RESOLVED, by the House of the Sixteenth Northern Marianas
30 Commonwealth Legislature, the Senate concurring, that the House respectfully informs

1 the President of the United States that on behalf of the People of the Commonwealth of
2 the Northern Mariana Islands that the Sixteenth Commonwealth Legislature strongly
3 opposes the creation of a Northern Islands National Monument; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Speaker of the House and the President
5 of the Senate of the Sixteenth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature shall certify
6 and the House Clerk and Senate Legislative Secretary shall attest to the adoption of this
7 joint resolution and thereafter transmit certified copies to the Honorable George W. Bush,
8 President of the United States of America; the Honorable Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary of
9 the United States Department of Interior; the Honorable Nick J. Rahall II, Chairman of
10 the Committee on Natural Resources, United States House of Representatives; the
11 Honorable Jeff Bingaman, Chairman of the United States Senate Committee on Energy
12 and Natural Resources; the Honorable Robert M. Gates, Secretary of the United States
13 Department of Defense; the Honorable Carlos M. Gutierrez, Secretary of the United
14 States Department of Commerce; the Honorable James L. Connaughton, Chairman of the
15 Council on Environmental Quality; the Honorable Benigno R. Fitial, Governor of the
16 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; the Honorable Pete A. Tenorio, CNMI
17 Washington Representative; Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., Undersecretary,
18 Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator, National Oceanic and
19 Atmospheric Administration; Mr. Angelo Villagomez, PEW Charitable Trust
20 Representative; and Mr. Jay Nelson, PEW Charitable Trust Representative.

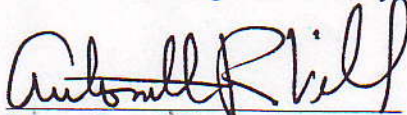
Prefiled: 9/10/08

Date:

Introduced by:


Rep. Ramon A. Tebuteb

Reviewed for legal sufficiency:


Antonette R. Kelly

House Legal Counsel