

*I MINA'TRENTAI UNU NA LIHESLATURAN GUÅHAN*  
**2011 (FIRST) REGULAR SESSION**

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Bill No. 148/31 (cov)  
Introduced by:

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**AN ACT TO PROVIDE A LEGISLATIVE SUBMISSION FOR CONSIDERATION BY GUAM'S VOTERS TO DETERMINE WHETHER RESIDENTS SUPPORT ANY REUNIFICATION EFFORT WITH THE RESIDENTS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS.**

1 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF GUAM:**

2 **Section 1.** Legislative Statement: For hundreds of years before European  
3 exploration in the 1500's, our people, the Indigenous Chamorro were one people.  
4 Our people and our islands were artificially separated, by forces thousands of miles  
5 away over a century ago. Prior and subsequent to this, through contact with the  
6 numerous Colonial Empires that have raided our shores, our physical and  
7 psychological landscapes would forever be altered. Emotional, cultural and political  
8 complexities now make up the structure of the relationship between our people of the  
9 north and south. Overviews of world events that demonstrate the extent to which the  
10 Mariana was an Imperial playground are as follows:

11 In 1521 Ferdinand Magellan landed upon our shores, ushering in the era of  
12 empire. By 1898, almost three centuries later, the Spanish-American War would  
13 politically divide our people in the southernmost island of Guam from her sister  
14 islands to the north, (Saipan, Rota, Tinian, etc.) as Guam was ceded to the United  
15 States and the NMI (Northern Mariana Islands) sold off to Germany. In 1919, Japan  
16 having declared war on Germany during WWI, took the imperial helm of the Northern

1 Mariana Islands. In 1941, The Japanese administration launched an attack on Guam  
2 on December 8<sup>th</sup> of that year. The Japanese occupied Guam for almost three years.

3 Tragic World War II events are believed to be the root of why the Mariana  
4 reunification efforts between the Northern Mariana and Guam were rejected by the  
5 people of Guam in the November 1969 plebiscite. Political leaders of Guam and the  
6 NMI craved a closer relationship with the United States and realized the reunifying  
7 would strengthen their chances at reaching this goal. However, deep historical  
8 resentment, a fall-out of WWII, became the stumbling block that would catapult both  
9 Guam and the NMI on different political paths towards the same objective.

10 Throughout the 1960's the issue of Mariana Reintegration dominated the  
11 political status talks of the region. Most people of Saipan, Tinian and Rota (NMI)  
12 favored integrating their political system with the people of Guam over being one  
13 entity in the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands. Having closer cultural ties and  
14 sharing language and heritage motivated them to seek closer political and economic  
15 affinity with their brethren in Guam. The NMI's community made it resoundingly  
16 clear that they wanted to unify with Guam in a series of plebiscites. However,  
17 reunification sentiments on Guam were mixed and variable due to concerns of  
18 economic setbacks and unresolved resentments from WWII.

19 In a special election in 1969 Guam voters rejected reintegration with the NMI.  
20 Roughly 6,000 of some 20,000 registered voters on the island showed up to the polls  
21 for this issue; a little less than half of the votes cast were unfavorable. After being  
22 rejected by Guam, the NMI began to aggressively seek political status changes  
23 independently from Guam and the larger Micronesian region. Over the following six  
24 years Guam leaders watched as the NMI leaders quickly and effectively negotiated a  
25 Covenant Agreement of Commonwealth Status with the United States. Similar

1 political status developments of the 1970's and years later on Guam were all  
2 unsuccessful.

3 Both the CNMI and Guam are experiencing economic challenges. For Guam,  
4 an increased military development is considered to be a double edged sword which  
5 may adversely deter Guam as a tourist destination for the Japan market. The current  
6 economic environment of CNMI, as it was during the first Reunification efforts is  
7 bleak. With the passing of U.S. Senate Bill S. 2739 the Federal government takes  
8 control over CNMI immigration and wage laws. This has caused closures of Textile  
9 Manufacturing factories, which served as the CNMI's major trade and industry.

10 On the other hand, Guam today stands at a crossroad of major economic  
11 change. The imminent transfer of U.S. Marines, dependants and other related  
12 personnel from Okinawa to Guam, estimated to increase the local population by at  
13 least 20,000 will have a major impact on the current state of Guam's economy and  
14 political environment. Residents of the CNMI may expect a spillover effect from the  
15 build-up. Included in the plans for the military relocation are training exercises from  
16 which the northern islands will be heavily utilized.

17 Resolution No. 367 authored in the Fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) Guam Legislature circa 1958  
18 held the following clause: *WHEREAS despite this unfortunate and perhaps accidental*  
19 *division of one race, the people of the Mariana have never lost hope that a day will*  
20 *come when all the Chamorros once again will be reunited within a homogenous*  
21 *political and economic union under one governmental administration;''*

22 Guam, Rota, Tinian and Saipan are the four major islands of the Mariana  
23 archipelago in the Western Pacific. These small islands are close in distance; they  
24 share a distinctive cultural heritage, relatively similar natural resources and a  
25 comparable population distribution. Yet these islands have been separated into two  
26 different political entities for almost 110 years, each with a special territorial

1 relationship with the United States of America (US). The Commonwealth of the  
2 Northern Mariana or the CNMI consists of Rota, Tinian, Saipan, and eleven other  
3 smaller and uninhabited isles. Guam the largest and southern most islands has its own  
4 unique political status; it is an Unincorporated Territory to the US.

5 It is *I Liheslaturan Guåhan's* intent that the submission proposed herein shall be  
6 non-binding and open to be voted upon by all registered voters of Guam during the  
7 General Election of 2012. The results shall provide guidance to the overall goal of the  
8 future of our island.

9 If the results favor reunification, the separation that occurred in 1898, when Guam  
10 was ceded to the United States, and the Northern Mariana Islands were sold by Spain  
11 to Germany, will finally be terminated and a unification of the people of the Mariana  
12 Archipelago will be accomplished and the overall direction set for purposes of moving  
13 forward.

14 **Section 2.** Legislative Submission. The people of Guam shall determine  
15 through the Guam Election Commission, subject to the provisions set pursuant to  
16 §17102(c), §17104(c), §17105 and §17401 and §17402 all of Chapter 17, Title 3  
17 Guam Code Annotated, if reunification with the residents of the Commonwealth of  
18 the Northern Mariana Islands is an option favored by registered voters on Guam,  
19 through a legislative submission on the 2012 General Election Ballot.

20 **Section 3.** The Question. The question put to voters shall be:

21 **1.) "Should Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana**  
22 **Islands (CNMI), reunify in the pursuit of a new political status? The CNMI**  
23 **consists of the islands of Rota, Tinian, Saipan, and eleven other smaller and**  
24 **uninhabited isles."**

25  **Yes**

26  **No**