

omm
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More than likely, by the time this reaches most readers the CNMI's gubernatorial campaign will finally have come to an end, as will the suspense as to the outcome. It's been a fascinating race, but then, almost every one of them seems to be distinctive for one reason or another. Sometimes it's the candidates' party-switching, or who's chosen to run as independent; sometimes it's the choice of running mates; sometimes it's just who has chosen to run at all.

The history book tells us that this is not the first time there have been three choices for governor/lieutenant governor - in 1981, the newly-formed Democratic Party also split, resulting in two sets of candidates running against the newly-formed Republican Party team. Interestingly enough, in that election the present governor ran for lieutenant governor on the Democratic ticket; and former governor Pedro P. Tenorio ran for governor on the Republican ticket. The Republican team won.

Perhaps what has been most distinctive about the present campaign was the seemingly open solicitation of the haole vote. On several occasions, what are generally considered primarily haole venues were used as "meet-the-candidate" sites, something that has - so far as I'm aware - not occurred here before.

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Even without knowing what effect - if any - the participation of more haole voters may have had on the outcome, and even though it may make me sound xenophobic (unduly fearful of strangers), I must confess that the present law, which requires only a 45-day residency in order for otherwise eligible CNMI residents to vote, makes me very uncomfortable.

How many newcomers will make the effort - in a mere 45 days - to study the issues, to learn about the candidates, to understand past events? And without doing so, how can they cast informed votes?

I would argue that the rationale that, on the mainland, such short residency requirements are standard, is not valid here. Just as the CNMI's Commonwealth status is different from that of either states or territories - is, in fact, unique - so are the issues facing the CNMI different from those of either states or territories. "Political" knowledge gained in one state is transferable to another. But "political" knowledge gained in a state is not transferable to the CNMI.

Though even a year's residency is not long enough to begin to comprehend the intricacies of CNMI politics, society, culture, setting the voter eligibility requirement at one year would, in my opinion, be a vast improvement over present law.

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Once can't help but wonder what prompted the governor's announcement, late last week, that he plans to move his and the lieutenant governor's offices to Susupe once the new judiciary complex is complete. The offices have been on Capitol Hill for more than 10 years. There has, moreover, been extensive - and expensive - renovation going on ever since the present governor moved into those quarters. There may have been complaints, when the offices first moved up from Susupe, that Capitol Hill was too remote from the community. But ten years later, with much of that area now taken up with large hotels and countless commercial buildings, with the homesteads on Capitol Hill, in Marpi, in Dandan and in Koblerville, that argument no longer has much validity.

If anyone were to move anywhere, it would make more sense for the Attorney General's Office to move to Susupe, which is where half of the office is already located, which is where both the Superior and Supreme Court are, which is where the court library is.....

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And speaking of homesteads, wouldn't it be nice if new ones were allowed to strengthen and support existing village communities, instead of continuing to create artificial new ones? Society derives its strength from a sense of community, of belonging, of shared interests, resources, experiences. Established villages have all of that. Artificial ones do not. And with nothing in common - except perhaps the hardships of homesteading itself - residents in new villages share no loyalty, no commitment, (to be completed)