

On My Mind
10/17/08

In a letter to the editor Dr. Tom Arkle wrote, a couple of weeks ago, on the difference between recall and impeachment as a way of removing elected officials from office. Recall, he pointed out, can only be done during regular elections (held every two years) so would only work for those serving more than a two-year term, and still in the first half of that term - unless the legislature passed a law allowing for a special election.

Which leaves impeachment, which must be initiated by the House - not very likely to happen.....

But isn't there - at least in theory - a third way to remove elected officials from office? Can't they be sued in court? Elected officials, legislators in particular, hold certain immunities, but surely a way could be found, through the courts, to stop the present governor from bankrupting the CNMI? The considerable additional debt the CNMI has acquired as a result of the Agrekko contract, the moneys allocated to the governor's anti-federalization suit, the growing deficits in the Retirement Fund, the pointless pursuit of geothermal energy, the refusal to consider pragmatic, local offers for less costly power production, to name a few - surely these are not non-actionable acts of stupidity (as some claim), but rather, actions for which the governor can be held accountable?

It is bitter medicine indeed to read that the nuclear energy system Dr. Arkle had so persuasively advocated for the CNMI may now be going to Palau. Hyperion, the candidate company, is making a presentation at the on-going 16th Pacific Basin Nuclear Conference being held in Aomori, Japan this week. More about the conference, themed "Pacific Partnership toward a Sustainable Nuclear Future," can be found at <
<http://www.pbnc2008.org> >.

Can we even afford another two years of such poor leadership?

Unwittingly, perhaps, former secretary of the Department of Lands and Natural Resources Tom Pangelinan has encapsulated the mindset which shapes the thinking of many opponents to the idea of establishing a national marine monument in the CNMI's northern waters. I quote from today's *Marianas Variety*:

"He [Pangelinan] noted, however, that 'the waters surrounding us is not ours' due to a federal court's decision on submerged lands. Pangelinan says he believes that 'it is our birthright to own the waters surrounding us.'"

Ironically, the CNMI could get more "rights" to those waters under a monument declaration than it would otherwise be entitled to under present law, since administration of the monument area could be shared by both the CNMI and the federal government.

Shame on the three non-voting delegate candidates who apparently couldn't be

bothered to show up for a forum sponsored by the Coalition for Recognition, Equality and Advancement of American Ethnic Minorities! Nor do the weak arguments offered by two of them do them any credit. CREAM held a mock election, and subsequently invited the four who'd gotten the highest votes to a candidates' forum last week - a perfectly acceptable exercise of democracy in action. Of the four - John Oliver Gonzales, former judge Juan T. Lizama, former Election Commissioner Gregorio C. Sablan, and Washington Rep. Pete A. Tenorio - only Sablan showed up. Lizama's campaign manager said the invitation came only the day before the forum; Tenorio's campaign manager said attendance at Rota's fiesta was more important.

Obviously, it did not occur to any of them that CREAM - insofar as it represents American ethnic minorities - could also be said to be inclusive of Chamorros and Carolinians, since they too could be considered "American ethnic minorities."

Nor, apparently, did it occur to any of them to contact CREAM, to find a more workable date. The organization had announced its forum several weeks ahead of time - which makes neither the "only got it yesterday" nor the "have to attend the Rota fiesta" an acceptable excuse.

And if the candidates had no intention of showing up, they could at least have informed the group in a timely manner, so that its members would not have been left sitting in front of an empty stage.

The non-voting delegate, once he gets to Congress, is supposed to represent the interests of ALL of the people who live in the CNMI. If he does not interact with them how can he do that?

Short takes:

Let us hope that the Senate committee on Resources, Economic Development and Resources, chaired by Tinian Senator Jude Hofschneider, will move quickly - and fairly - on the question of impropriety on the part of non-voting-delegate candidate David Cing's brother.

To his credit, David Cing has suspended his campaign until accusations by TaoTao Tano that the brother participated in illegal land transactions with the Department of Public Lands is cleared.

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A big thank-you to the *Marianas Variety* and its editor Zaldy Dandan for the recent article featuring Senator Maria T. Pangelinan. We do not hear enough from or about this remarkable woman, one of the few legislators who takes her position very seriously, is extremely capable, applies herself with tireless zeal, is totally credible, and does such a superb job of informing her constituents in her all-too-rare articles. She deserves support and encouragement - and appreciation! - from not only her colleagues, but from all the rest of us as well.

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Would it be asking too much to ask that CUC, in its emergency contingency plans (wasn't last week Emergency Preparedness Week?), include steps to bring the Telesource

generator from Tinian to the CNMI to avoid another siege of frequent, lengthy blackouts?

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Many thanks to all the readers who let me know I goofed again in trying to correct a previous error. I do know who Perry Tenorio is, and I do know that he is managing director of the Marianas Visitors Authority, not an attorney. That I mis-identified him as the Perry being sworn in as a judge was just sloppy thinking on my part. My apologies to both Perry Tenorio and Judge Perry Inos.

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Readers have asked whether I ever got my stimulus check. Yes, I did - the day I returned from my annual trek to the mainland. I had been promised I'd get it before I left - but found out later that the power went out that day, so they could not print it.

To my bitter disappointment, my stimulus check was not for the full six hundred dollars, which, of course, I'd already spent, figuratively speaking. I'd decided to use half to give to three different charities, the other half for my own needs. Since I only got half, however, that plan failed, and the charities lost out. It seems the amount of the check is related to earnings; in my case, it came to the same figure that my tax return showed as the tax on my taxable income, neither of which was very large this past year.

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To end on a more positive note: one good thing about the current economic dive is that oil - and therefore gas prices (and CUC rates?) - have fallen, and so have prices for scrap metal, so copper theft isn't as profitable as it was. Be it ever so slim, there is a silver lining.....