



SAIPAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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2009

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August 14, 2009

The Honorable Ray N. Yumul
Chair, House Standing Committee on Ways and Means
House of Representatives
16th Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 16-261, to authorize the poker license fees collected from Rota to be deposited into a separate account from the general fund for appropriation by the Rota Legislative Delegation for a period of five years to augment the operations of the Rota Gaming Commission, and for other purposes. The Saipan Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee has reviewed the bill and opposes its intent.

While we note that the intent of the bill is "to augment the operations of the Rota casino industry," the proposed amendment to 4 CMC § 1503(a)(2) contains no language restricting the use of the funds for those purposes and instead simply wrests control of these funds from the legislature and places it solely with the Rota legislative delegation. Furthermore, we fail to understand the necessity or desirability for this amendment, in light of the stated requirement that "the annual budget appropriations of the First Senatorial District (Rota) shall be reduced by the total amount of poker license fees collected and deposited into the separate account." It seems clear that the sole intent of this bill is to remove some portion of Rota's annual budget appropriations from the purview of the Commonwealth legislature and grant sole control of those funds to the Rota legislative delegation. We urge the legislature not to cede control of general fund revenues of the Commonwealth to the exclusive control of one municipality.

I would be happy to answer any questions you have or provide any information your committee may need with regard to this matter.

Sincerely,

James T. Arenovski
President