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(Representing the Northwest Region of Chuuk)  
19<sup>th</sup> FSM Congress

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My greetings and sincere “tirou” to all readers, not least to my constituent and friend, Mr Vidalino Raatior. I would like to respond to the comments that Vid has been making in various fora in the course of the last two weeks in connection with a Resolution that, as member of the FSM Congress representing the Northwest region of Chuuk, I co-sponsored requesting for the termination of the Amended Compact of Free Association with the United States. Co-sponsored by two other colleagues, the Resolution was introduced during the recent 19<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the FSM Congress (Nov 2015).

Vid’s watchdog passion is commendable; and so is his concerns for the welfare of our people, particularly those residing in the US, including Guam and Hawaii, under the umbrella of the Compact treaty.

However, I am sure Vid would readily agree that the watchdogs must also be watched. After all, who would make sure that they behave when left to their own devices, especially when they are virtually accountable to no one, being without official constituents? The watchdogs’ conventional claim to the “truth,” including their pretense to sincerity of intention and selflessness of purpose, is scarcely beyond reproach. Indeed, the watchdogs and their innocent-looking feline cousins could benefit from reaching out to the other points of view in a calm and open-minded manner. Accordingly, I would like to offer the following observations and explanations:

1) While I represent the NW region of Chuuk in the FSM Congress, I would, as I did, broach the issue of “termination” beyond NW for the simple reason that the magnitude and potential gravity of the subject goes far beyond the NW. In other words, Termination has direct relevance to our Nation as a whole, not just to a political subdivision thereof. As an elected official, I do expect that my actions on public affairs be judged and scrutinized by my constituents.

It is regrettable that my constituent and friend Vid almost succeeded in re-defining and re-packaging the Termination question and, having done so, downgraded it almost exclusively as a “NW issue” for the special attention of the “NW voters.” My simple and humble request to Vid is to help me keeping the subject in its proper perspectives. It is a national issue that should be maintained at the highest level of calm examination without muddying it up in localized considerations or by knee-jerk reactions.

2)Vid's pieces on the subject are well written. Unfortunately, he missed the point by overlooking to make the proper distinctions, in the context of law-making, between a "resolution" and a "bill." Making that distinction is critical to understanding the preferred choice of procedure by which the co-sponsors of the proposed Resolution sought to effectuate their intention, while leaving room for continued dialogue. I appeal to Vid as a commentator on highly volatile public issues to aim well before going off on an indiscriminate shooting spree and engage in an analysis with inherently flawed bases.

By neglecting to differentiate a proposed resolution from a bill, Vid came close to sounding false alarm by announcing that the end of the world for the Northwest people residing in the US is right around the corner with the proposed Resolution that I co-sponsored. Apart from inadvertently playing on the ignorance of our people already in the US and for whom "deportation" is often an immediate scary thing, Deportation is a complex subject that Vid presented in too broad, sweeping and simplistic manner; the need for patient reflection on important public issues diminishes when the voting public is (mis)led into believing in the immediacy and presumed logical connection between Compact termination and deportation.

Nothing can be stretched beyond the simple truth that the proposed Resolution was a "request" intended for consideration by the FSM President. It has no "legal" teeth formally mandating the President to take this or that action. I respectfully ask my constituent and friend Vid to make the necessary clarification so as to avoid causing unnecessary confusion, however inadvertent.

3)I respect Vid's capacity for detecting approaching storms (i.e., Secession and Education Priority in Chuuk). But his almost knee-jerk blowing of horn of immediate destruction betrays his lack of appreciation for the whole regime of "termination" as set forth in Article 144 of the Amended COFA as well as the formal mandate in effectuating this procedure, in whichever form, unilateral or mutual consent, it may take.

In simple terms, members of Congress may express their views in the form of resolutions on almost any issue ranging from bird-watching to assessment of license fees on fishing vessels by distant water fishing countries in our EEZ to infrastructure sector grant and the Chuuk main road to global warming. (For instance, during the same session of Congress, my colleague Senator Ursemal of Yap introduced a resolution congratulating his favorite team, Kansas City Royals).

But at the end of the day, the formal responsibility to take action on Compact termination rests with the Executive Branch. In other words, Congress does NOT have the first nor the last word in the matter of Compact termination. Thanks to the FSM Constitution itself, there are existing, built-in arrangements for safeguard. I appeal to my constituent and friend Vid that we both better get this straight, or somebody else may come in and reprimand us to do our homework well.

This is not to say that the Legislative Branch is completely without a role in the matter of Compact termination and renewal. While the conduct of diplomacy is preeminently the province of the Executive Branch, it still leaves plenty of room for collaboration to help ensure maximum

effectiveness. There may be “times” when it will not be appropriate for the peace-seeking and friendship-loving diplomats to make utterances, yet such utterances need to be made, even if for purposes of tactical maneuver; it is under this and other circumstances where the so-called constituent-dominated and advantage-driven “politicians” should come into play and earn their fat pay, as is often said.

4) In view of the above, let me speak straight to the proposed Resolution itself. Truthfully, it did not happen overnight out of a wedlock dream. It is a serious undertaking triggered not by one event but by a series of events deployed by the US. I sincerely believed then, as I still do, that it was the best calculated response that could be given under the circumstances. The effectiveness of the intent of the proposed Resolution should be maintained or safeguarded by keeping an appreciable level of confidentiality of the details of our intentions or purposes that gave rise to the proposed Resolution in the first place, otherwise the fundamental objective of the Resolution would be altogether compromised.

This is not a whiplash on the “right” of the public to know what is going on in the government; but confidentiality has its own practical utilities employed even by so-called liberal, “open-door” governments. Imagine if demands for full disclosures were uncritically honored at all times. Without doubt, the result would be anarchy, which is not what neither my constituent and friend Vid and I actively promote. Even the FSM and US Supreme Courts, as well as the Holy See, use a little confidentiality, often a shorthand for “authorized secrecy.” In short, I seek your understanding that, at this point, it would be an act of grand irresponsibility for me to wholly compromise the noble intention that gave rise to the Resolution in the first place by divulging the details of its intention at this point.

To be sure, there are competing interests to be evaluated and reconciled, not an easy task. Idealism is great but it cannot be pushed ahead full-throttle at the expense of Practicality and Pragmatism. I appeal to my constituent and friend Vid and many others to recognize this essential fact of life. The time shall come when, after discharging my civic duty in upholding what I truly believe is the public interest, the historians will move in to write about the truth, at least perceptions thereof.

It was never my intention to sweat-mouth my constituent and friend Vid into embracing my views when I called him to offer to discuss the Resolution in a manner that is less confrontational or less grandstanding. However, it was my sincere hope that, through a frank and calm exchange of views between two men, he would come to a new horizon of understanding and a higher level of appreciation of the “sensitivity” of the subject especially at a time of posturing in view of the year 2023. I remain hopeful that he will reconsider the extension of my invitation to him, as I believe we could learn from each other without meaning to crudely brainwash each other

5) One other point that I was hoping to impress upon my constituent and friend Vid and others with similar views is that we are approximately only seven (7) years from 2023, which is when the financial and technical assistance provisions of the Compact, are speculated to terminate or are subject to be reviewed or reconsidered. Needless to say, these are “lovey-

toughy” times of posturing by the parties to the Compact treaties. With two hundred years of experience under its belt and resources second to none, in contrast with the FSM’s mere thirty-six years of self-government and engagement in the international arena, the US is undoubtedly a master in this game of calculated moves and counter-moves. It is plain silly to think that the US has just been sitting idly by, though “idling” is one of the tools it could afford deploying and employing. The truth of the matter is that Uncle Sam has been busy strategizing and trying to finesse its pre-negotiating choreography, and we have seen statements emerging from the mouths of various US officials in the past few years that the US Government would not “renew” or “renegotiate” the financial package of the Compact come 2023.

The relevant question for us in the FSM, as well as for our citizens currently residing in the US, is this: what can we do in view of the approaching year 2023 and the posturing already carried out by the US? Admittedly, this is not an easy task, but it is a task that we must take up. In doing my part, I would like to remind that I did not seek the NW seat in Congress because I believed there will be easy solutions to our Compact future.

I did envision that I would take unpopular stands, such as I did when co-sponsoring the proposed Resolution. There are times, and there will be more, to have the courage to stand up and let our voice be heard. There will also be times when we must challenge ourselves to do things that we have grown accustomed to having others doing for us. Not a charity to be handed to us in wholesale portions by others, self-dignity is self-earned and maintained.

In short, if you had expected me to sit in the NW chair in Congress and remain silent or just follow the majority out of fear or intimidation, such expectation was woefully misguided. I expect to be held up in stringent scrutiny, while continuing to have the courage to speak up for my conviction or what I truly believed to be in the best interest of my constituents, our Chuuk State, and our Nation. These are amongst the issues that will be covered in the second and forthcoming responses to Vid’s comments.