



GOV. COMM. 15-191
(HOUSE)

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

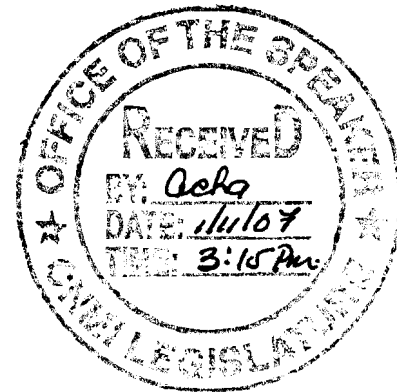
Benigno R. Fitial
Governor

Timothy P. Villagomez
Lieutenant Governor

JAN 11 2007

The Honorable Joseph M. Mendiola
Senate President, The Senate
Fifteenth Northern Marianas
Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950

The Honorable Oscar M. Babauta
Speaker, House of Representatives
Fifteenth Northern Marianas
Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950



Dear Mr. President and Mr. Speaker:

This is to inform you that I have signed into law House Bill 15-183, HD1, entitled, "To amend 2 CMC § 5601; and for other purposes," which was passed by the Fifteenth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

This measure allows hotels to remove seaweed and sea grass from safe swimming zones fronting or adjacent to them by exempting them from Public Law 11-63. When Public Law 11-63 took effect in February 18, 1999, there was grave concern that the seaweed, sea grass, sea cucumbers, and other edible echinoderms were declining with no opportunity to recover, which made it inadvisable to harvest them. However, the CNMI's ever increasing dependence on the tourism industry to revive our ailing economy begs for this legislation.

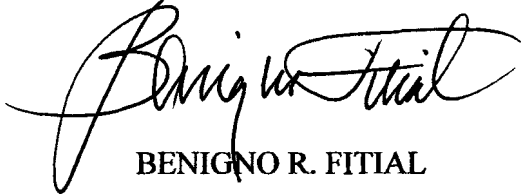
With the continuous decline of the garment industry, it is important to improve and strengthen our tourism industry. One component of improving the tourism industry is through destination enhancement. The beaches of the CNMI are advertised to potential tourists as beautiful and clean. The term "miles and miles of white sandy beaches" is often used. Yet, in the recent years, our tourists visit our islands only to find uninviting, unattractive, seemingly unclean beaches as a result of the seaweeds, sea grass, and sea cucumbers.

In order to attract repeat and first time tourists, our islands must be competitive with other vacation destinations. Presenting pristine beaches will clearly help achieve that goal.

I commend the legislature for introducing this legislation. We must continue working collaboratively to improve the CNMI for our people.

This bill becomes **Public Law No. 15-41**. Copies bearing my signature are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benigno R. Fitia", written in a cursive style.

BENIGNO R. FITIAL

cc: Special Legal Counsels, Office of the Governor
Legal Counsel, Office of the Lt. Governor
Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General
Commissioner, Department of Public Safety
Secretary, Department of Commerce
Secretary, Department of Public Health
Secretary, Department of Public Works
Secretary, Department of Community and Cultural Affairs
Secretary, Department of Finance
Marianas Visitors Authority
Coastal Resources Management
All Department and Activity Heads
All Mayors
All Municipal Councils
Senior Policy Advisor
Special Assistant to the Administration
Special Assistant for Programs and Legislative Review



The House of Representatives
NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
P.O. BOX 500586
SAIPAN, MP 96950

December 6, 2006

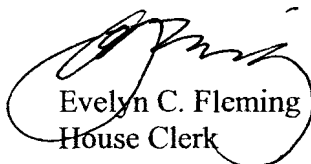
PUBLIC LAW NO. 15-41

The Honorable Timothy P. Villagomez
Acting Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern
Mariana Islands
Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Acting Governor Villagomez:

I have the honor of transmitting herewith for your action **H. B. No. 15-183, HD1**, entitled: "To amend 2 CMC § 5601; and for other purposes." The Bill was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Fifteenth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

Sincerely yours,



Evelyn C. Fleming
House Clerk

Attachment



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
FIFTEENTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
SECOND REGULAR SESSION, 2006

PUBLIC LAW NO. 15-41

H. B. No. 15-183, HD1

AN ACT

To amend 2 CMC § 5601; and for other purposes.

In the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Offered by Representative: Arnold I. Palacios

Date: September 26, 2006

Referred to: None

Public Hearing: None

Standing Committee Report: None

Passed First and Final Reading on September 27, 2006

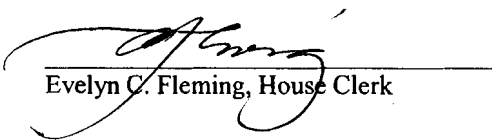
In the SENATE

Referred to: Committee on Resources, Economic Development and Programs

Public Hearing: None

Standing Committee Report No. 15-78

Passed Final Reading on November 30, 2006


Evelyn C. Fleming, House Clerk



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
FIFTEENTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
SECOND REGULAR SESSION, 2006

PUBLIC LAW NO. 15-41
H. B. No. 15-183, HD1

AN ACT

To amend 2 CMC § 5601; and for other purposes.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE FIFTEENTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH
LEGISLATURE:**

1 **Section 1. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature finds that tourism is an important
2 economic component of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. In addition, the
3 CNMI tourism industry attracts over 500,000 visitors a year throughout Asia and beyond.
4 One of the CNMI's greatest assets, and a major consideration of those visiting our islands are
5 our pristine beaches and ocean. However, increased development and inadequate
6 infrastructure has resulted in the increased growth of seaweed and sea grass on our
7 beachfronts. The increased proliferation of these seaweed and sea grass has resulted in a
8 negative impression of our oceans by our visitors and is of great concern to the Marianas
9 Visitors Authority as well as its travel industry partners.

10 **Section 2. Amendment.** 2 CMC § 5601 is hereby amended to read as follows:

11 **"§ 5601. Moratorium.**

12 (a) There is hereby established for a period of at least ten years a
13 moratorium on the harvest of all non-commercially grown seaweed, sea grass, or sea
14 cucumbers or other edible echinoderms. Such moratorium may be extended in whole
15 or in part by the Secretary of the Department of Lands and Natural Resources after
16 ten years should it be determined the population of seaweed, sea grass, or sea
17 cucumbers and other edible echinoderms have not sufficiently recovered and
18 permitting harvest is still inadvisable.

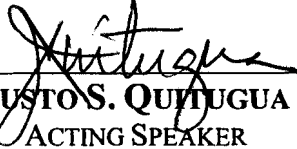
1 (b) Exemption. Any hotel directly fronting or adjacent to the Saipan
2 lagoon shall be exempted from subsection (a). The Coastal Resources Management
3 Office in consultation with the Division of Fish and Wildlife shall promulgate rules
4 governing the area of allowance for the removal of seaweed and sea grass. Provided
5 that, the area of allowance shall be limited to that within the safe swimming zone or
6 other designated public beach areas as established by the Coastal Resources
7 Management (CRM)."

8 **Section 3. Severability.** If any provision of this Act or the application of any such
9 provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent
10 jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or
11 circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.

12 **Section 4 Effective Date.** This Act shall take upon its approval by the Governor or
13 upon its becoming law without such approval.

CERTIFIED BY:

ATTESTED TO BY:


JUSTO S. QUIUGUA
ACTING SPEAKER

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES


EVELYN C. FLEMING
HOUSE CLERK

APPROVED on this 11th day of January, 2006


BENIGNO R. FITIAL
GOVERNOR

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS