

David M. Apatang
Governor



Dennis James "DJ" C. Mendiola
Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

August 5, 2025

GOV2025-037

The Honorable Edmund S. Villagomez
Speaker
House of Representatives
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas
Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950

The Honorable Karl R. King-Nabors
President
The Senate; Twenty-Fourth Northern
Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. Speaker and Mr. President:

This is to inform you that I have signed into law **House Bill No. 24-2**, entitled, "To establish a process for the delivery of a State of the Commonwealth Address to the Legislature by the Governor.", which was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

This bill becomes **Public Law No. 24-09**. Copies bearing my signature are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,


DAVID M. APATANG
Governor

cc: Lieutenant Governor; Attorney General; Commonwealth Law Revision;
Public Auditor; Acting Special Assistant for Administration;
Programs and Legislative Review Office



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH
LEGISLATURE

Vice Speaker Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building
Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950
cnmileg.net

July 21, 2025

The Honorable Arnold I. Palacios
Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern
Mariana Islands
Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Governor Palacios:

I have the honor of transmitting herewith for your action **H. B. No. 24-2**, entitled: "To establish a process for the delivery of a State of the Commonwealth Address to the Legislature by the Governor.", which was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

Sincerely yours,


Linda B. Muña, MPA
House Clerk

Attachment



TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANA COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FIRST REGULAR SESSION

FEBRUARY 14, 2025

REPRESENTATIVE RALPH N. YUMUL OF SAIPAN, PRECINCT 3 (*for himself*, Representatives Joel C. Camacho, and Marissa R. Flores) in an open and public meeting with an opportunity for the public to comment, introduced the following Bill:

H. B. No. 24-2

AN ACT

TO ESTABLISH A PROCESS FOR THE DELIVERY OF A STATE OF THE COMMONWEALTH ADDRESS TO THE LEGISLATURE BY THE GOVERNOR.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Bill was referred to the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations, which submitted Standing Committee Report 24-1; adopted 5/15/2025.

THE BILL WAS PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON FIRST AND FINAL READING, MAY 15, 2025;

without amendments and transmitted to **THE SENATE.**

IN THE SENATE

The Bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Government, and Law, which submitted Standing Committee Report 24-19; adopted 7/14/2025.

THE BILL WAS PASSED BY THE SENATE ON FIRST AND FINAL READING, JULY 14, 2025;

without amendments and returned to **THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.**

H. B. NO. 24-2 IS DULY PASSED BY THE TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE.



Linda B. Muña, House Clerk



TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FIRST DAY, SECOND SPECIAL SESSION

MAY 15, 2025

H. B. No. 24-2

AN ACT

**TO ESTABLISH A PROCESS FOR THE DELIVERY OF A STATE OF
THE COMMONWEALTH ADDRESS TO THE LEGISLATURE
BY THE GOVERNOR.**

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN
MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:**

1 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.**

2 Article II, Section 9 (b) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Northern
3 Mariana Islands provides: "The Governor shall report at least annually to the
4 legislature regarding affairs of the Commonwealth and new measures that are
5 necessary or desirable. The report shall include a comprehensive annual financial
6 report prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles."
7 Similarly, Article II, Section 3 of the United States federal Constitution, provides
8 that the President "shall from time to time give to the Congress information of
9 the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such measures as
10 he shall judge necessary and expedient."

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1 Adopting the federal phrase “State of the Union” but changing “Union” to
2 “Commonwealth,” our government describes the annual report of the Governor
3 as a “State of the Commonwealth Address” or SOCA that is delivered expressly
4 to the Legislature. Traditionally, the governor may deliver a SOCA in writing or
5 as a recorded or live speech. A mere written SOCA could be delivered by hand or
6 electronic means for the Legislature to read at the convenience of the members.
7 But a live SOCA raises unique concerns that require planning and joint decision-
8 making. Presently, other than establishing an annual requirement, the CNMI
9 Constitution leaves undecided the details of how, when and where the annual
10 SOCA shall be delivered to the Legislature.

11 Ideally, a live SOCA would need to be delivered in the physical presence of
12 the Legislature in order to be effective—although the SOCA also could be
13 simultaneously broadcast on TV or radio or streamed on the internet for the
14 benefit of the public. Historically, the delivery of the SOCA as a live speech in the
15 presence of the Legislature has been preceded by a formal invitation by the
16 Legislature to the Governor through a joint resolution of the House and Senate.
17 The invitation for a live SOCA has traditionally identified mutually acceptable
18 meeting time and place that was convenient for all branches of government.

19 As a practical and logistical matter, the timing of the delivery of a live SOCA
20 requires careful consideration of several factors, including availability of all
21 branches of government, convenience of access and related political concerns such
22 as an impending election. The location of a live SOCA also must be able to
23 accommodate all members of the Legislature and any members of the Executive
24 and Judicial branches that may wish to attend, along with an opportunity for the

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1 public to attend or at least hear the SOCA. Given these competing interests and
2 the absence of a formalized process to schedule a SOCA, particularly a live SOCA,
3 the Legislature finds that clear legislation is needed to set out some of the basic
4 steps in scheduling the annual delivery of a SOCA to the Legislature. In order to
5 address this need to establish a straightforward process for scheduling a SOCA
6 in place of traditional methods that can be inconsistently applied, this legislation
7 creates a statutory, yet flexible, process for scheduling the annual delivery of a
8 SOCA, particularly when the SOCA is delivered live.

9 **SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.**

10 Title 1 (Government), section 2053, of the Commonwealth Code is amended
11 to read as follows:

12 **“§ 2053. Office of the Governor: Duties.**

13 (a) The Governor has the powers and duties as provided in the
14 Commonwealth Constitution or as provided by law. In addition, the
15 Governor shall receive official visitors and conduct official ceremonies of the
16 Commonwealth. These duties and responsibilities may be delegated to the
17 Lieutenant Governor or to elected or appointed officials of the
18 Commonwealth.

19 (b) Consistent with Article II, section 9, of the CNMI Constitution, the
20 Governor shall deliver an annual State of the Commonwealth Address
21 (SOCA) to the Legislature. The Governor shall deliver the SOCA not later
22 than March of any calendar year, and may present the SOCA live, recorded
23 or in writing. A written or recorded SOCA shall be transmitted by the
24 Governor to the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House for

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1 delivery to the members. Prior to any live SOCA, the Governor shall give
2 written notice of a proposed date and time to both the President of the
3 Senate and the Speaker of the House no later than 45 days prior to the
4 proposed date in order for the Legislature to consider a joint resolution
5 setting out the time and place for the SOCA. If such a joint resolution fails
6 to pass in both houses of the Legislature, the Governor shall submit only a
7 written or recorded SOCA.”

8 **SECTION 3. SEVERABILITY.**

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

14 **SECTION 4. SAVINGS CLAUSE.**

15 This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not be construed as
16 affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under statutes
17 repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the statutes.
18 Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under
19 or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of
20 terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall
21 already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

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1 **SECTION 5. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

2 This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the Governor, or it becoming
3 law without such approval.

Attested to by:



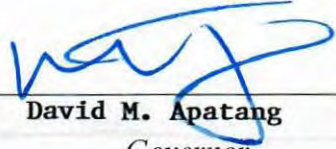
Linda B. Muña, House Clerk

Certified by:



SPEAKER EDMUND S. VILLAGOMEZ
House of Representatives
24th Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature

Approved this *5th* day of *August*, 2025



David M. Apatang
Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands