

On My Mind

2/8/02

From the looks of things, how much things change under this administration - and how quickly - will depend to a considerable extent on Saipan Senators Ramon S. Guerrero and Pete P. Reyes. The Governor, in his inaugural speech, declared his intent to reform the way government operates - to make it open, fair, accessible - and.

Today, House Speaker Heinz S. Hofschneider told members of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce that he intended to make the the work of the House open, accessible and responsive as well. The legislative tracking system being developed for the House, he said, would allow anyone to find out the status of any bill introduced in the House, and to add his or her comments to the bill on-line. Hofschneider also noted that the House rules have been changed, and bills will no longer be allowed to die in committee - they must be reported out after 90 days.

Hofschneider talked about other reforms he believes are needed - in the retirement system, in the use of excise taxes, in expanding employment in the private sector, and as House Speaker he is in a good position to see that his ideas are acted upon. With both the House Speaker and the Governor pledging to reform government, there is reason to hope that perhaps this time there actually will be meaningful change.

Then there's the Senate. The present "alliance" has pledged to support the Governor, but there's been no test yet to see whether its strength will hold. And unfortunately, two of Saipan's Senators - one junior, one senior - have given every indication that they have no intention of accepting the present power alignment. Inadvertently, Senators Guerrero and Reyes have put themselves in the position of becoming "gate-keepers."

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Americans are being brain-washed. And apparently, no one is objecting. The President, in his state of the union address earlier this week repeatedly referred to the nation as being at war. And he is defending the biggest defense budget the nation has ever seen as fully justified - because the nation is at war.

The problem - or one of them - is that the U.S. is not officially at war. Though the President keeps saying that we are, legally it takes Senate approval to formally put the U.S. in a state of war. The President has not even submitted a request to the Senate to declare war. Nor can he - because there is no nation - yet - to declare war against.

The defense budget being proposed will put the nation back in debt - just two years after it had been announced that there was finally a surplus in the U.S. budget.

From Rachel's Environment and Health News # 737:

Population will grow at rate of 1.1% per year between now and 2020 - resulting in a 23% increase in the total. "This basic trend will impose a 23% greater burden on the natural environment in the next 20 years. Furthermore, **as household size diminishes (requiring more individual homes)** and urban sprawl increases, the burden imposed on the environment by each individual is steadily rising, the OECD says."