

On My Mind  
2/29/08

Has anyone noticed the dead silence, in the CNMI, about the tax rebates the U.S. Congress has approved as part of President Bush's attempt to stimulate the economy? Over 130,000,000 U.S. households will start receiving rebate checks ranging from \$300.00 - \$1200.00 or more in May of this year under the program. All that is required is for the individual to file a federal income tax form for 2007, and to have earned \$3,000 or more - and that includes Social Security benefits. And yes, that applies to the CNMI as well.

While newspaper stories from Guam have indicated that the monies will be going through local government coffers, with the result that individual checks might be delayed because GovGuam is not current in mailing out rebates - and neither is the CNMI - the web site for the refunds - < <http://www.irs.gov/irs/article/0,,id=177937,00.html> > states that the IRS itself will be sending the checks directly to taxpayers.

Stories from Guam have also indicated that it was Congressional Delegate Madeleine Bordallo who insisted that the Congress provide the outlying territories with their moneys in advance, instead of having to wait for reimbursement from the federal government, as the states must do. This is not consistent with what appears on the IRS information page, either, but it is theoretically possible, of course, that the outlying territories will not be treated as are the 50 states, and that the rebates for its tax payers must go through local tax offices. (Efforts to obtain confirmation have been unsuccessful.)

In which case, it should be of major concern to CNMI tax payers that arrangements be made to sequester that money - to put it into an account that is reserved solely and exclusively for the eligible tax payers - so that it does not get reprogrammed by the legislature or the governor.

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For those that might like some hard data about public radio station KRNM's situation, herewith some details, some numbers. In the past, KRNM has been funded primarily by Northern Marianas College, which holds an FCC institutional license for a public radio station, namely KRNM. NMC has paid for housing KRNM, for its power consumption - rather high, given that the equipment must be kept in a cool climate 24/7 and that its transmitter is also power-needy - for the salary of its lone full-time staffer, Station Manager Carl Pogue, and for satellite and program fees.

KRNM is not allowed, by the terms of the FCC license, to accept commercial advertising but it does receive some funds from "underwriters" (usually, local businesses) who are acknowledged at the beginning and/or end of particular programs of their choice. It also obtains funds from listener contributions obtained largely during its twice-a-year fund-raising campaigns,

from education tax credit contributions and from grants, but together these represent less than a third of the station's total costs.

Thus, with NMC's decision that it can no longer afford to support KRNM to the extent it has in the past, KRNM must seek substantial amounts of new funding if it is to continue to operate. NMC has given KRNM until May 30<sup>th</sup> to find funding to support it until the end of this fiscal year. Once that has been accomplished, KRNM must find on-going funding for its operational, staffing, and program costs if it is to stay on the air.

A proposed budget for doing so, drawn up by Pogue, shows that \$128,700 would be needed annually. This includes \$70,000 for 2 staff, \$4,000 in equipment, \$7,000 in engineering and legal contractual support, \$25,000 in program fees to National Public Radio and Public Radio International, \$2,500 in communication costs, \$5,000 in equipment maintenance and repair, \$15,000 in utilities, and \$200 in office supplies. Not included are another \$4,000 in desirable computer upgrades, or any travel. Nor is rent - NMC has indicated it might be willing to continue housing the station if it can meet its other costs elsewhere.

With KRNM eligible for educational tax credits, Pogue has had some success in garnering additional support from the local private sector - some of whose members have agreed to donate their tax credits to the station. Further grant funding is also being pursued.

Other possibilities being looked into: Homeland Security may be willing to contribute to KRNM in return for access to the station in case of emergencies, and to broadcast its message; the U.S. Department of Interior may be willing to contribute in exchange for airing of information about labor and immigration issues.

In short, the station is not dead yet, and indeed, may survive after all! In the meantime, underwriters and grantors still need to know how many listeners KRNM has - that people care. So, be sure to vote "Yes!" on this week's Tribune poll!

And keep on giving!

For more information, contact Carl Pogue at 234-5766, or e-mail him at <[carlp@nmcnet.edu](mailto:carlp@nmcnet.edu)>.

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Short takes:

An insight Obama's spindoctors seem to have failed to find: it's not a change of program that he is advocating so much as it is a change in HOW - how the programs are run, how policy is determined, how candidates for the bench are chosen, how, in short, things are done in the nation's capital, in running the national government.....something a few of the CNMI's newly-elected legislators are already working on at the local level.

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And speaking of which, has anyone noticed that members of the new 16<sup>th</sup>

Legislature have already introduced <EM>49</EM> new pieces of legislation?  
Next week: a look at who, what, and why.....

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Some might consider it a nit, but Representative Victor Hocog's blanket assertion that doctors should not be allowed to prescribe medicine over the phone - as reported in a story in this past Tuesday's *Marianas Variety* - really should not go unchallenged. It could save enormous amounts of time if a patient known to the particular doctor could consult with the doctor over the phone (or even via e-mail) and have that doctor prescribe medicine for the patient without that patient having to suffer through the often long wait to be seen by a doctor first. The doctor is professionally bound to be ethical. If he violates that trust, he does not deserve the right to practice. But within the bounds of ethical conduct, it should be perfectly acceptable to prescribe meds over the phone!

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Not to begrudge Northern Marianas College support, but if it had established a trades academy - as now exists in Guam - it could have had its students and their instructors doing much of the work involved in the repair and maintenance work and planning for a new campus for which it is now seeking reprogramming of some \$3,000,000 that are at least as urgently needed by the Commonwealth Health Center, the Public Safety Department, the Public School System.....

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Special Legal Counsel to the Governor Howard Willens has stated, in an e-mail, that he and his wife (Deanne Siemer) are not reimbursed for the rent they pay for their house on Navy Hill, that is she not reimbursed for her air travel, that she is not receiving per diem.

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Barbara Sher's newest production, *"The Play Buffet, a Little Something for Everyone's Taste"*, will be performed March 7, 8, 13 and 14<sup>th</sup> at the American Memorial Park Theater. The show consists of ten acts in a variety of flavors from 40's melodrama to heartfelt personal stories. Tickets, \$5.00. Showtime, 7:00 p.m.

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Last but not least, also at American Memorial Park Theater, this Sunday, March 2, at 2:00 p.m., the FREE film "His Girl Friday," a 1940's comedy starring Cary Grant, Rosalind Russell, Ralph Bellamy and Gene Lockhart, will be shown as part of the Park's World War II film series.