

# A Renewal of Faith - May 30, 2013

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Governor Calvo, Speaker Won Pat, Chief Justice Carbullido, and my dear people of Guam:

It is once again my honor to update you on my work in Congress on behalf of our people and to discuss federal issues important to our community.

Our nation and our community face many challenges and tough decisions. As in all difficult times, we look inward to find the resolve we will need to meet these challenges, and we renew our conviction that better times are ahead for us, that we can overcome many obstacles, and that our faith in our people is undiminished.

Our journey will never be complete unless we undertake to resolve our political status and to decolonize Guam. We must renew our determination to take the necessary steps that will define our political relationship with the United States, and to give the people of Guam the political dignity that they deserve. In the 111th Congress I passed legislation that authorized the use of technical assistance funds from the Department of the Interior to promote political status education. At the time, Assistant Secretary Tony Babauta urged Guam to submit one consolidated grant application that included all stakeholder interests, including the government, indigenous rights groups, and the University. I hope we can get this back on track and I will work with the Governor and Legislature to move this grant forward.

Our nation is on a slow but sure recovery after a long recession, and Guam's economy reflects the same optimism. However, fiscal issues continue to dominate the political debate in Washington, most notably surrounding sequestration.

At a time when we should be working to grow and strengthen our local and national economies, the inability of Congress to resolve differences to address the broad, across the board mandatory spending cuts known as sequestration has created much confusion throughout the nation and uncertainty in many federal programs. The threat of these cuts was intended to be so drastic and politically untenable that members of Congress would be forced to come to an agreement to address the nation's debt and deficit issues. I have long argued that addressing our nation's fiscal challenges must be done in a responsible manner that includes both cutting spending and closing tax loopholes. Unfortunately, Congress has been unable to find a solution mutually acceptable to both Republicans and Democrats, and for at least the remainder of fiscal year 2013, the cuts imposed by sequestration will remain in effect.

These cuts are beginning to be felt by federal agencies and local governments throughout the country. The mandatory spending cuts are reducing much needed federal assistance to law enforcement agencies, state and local departments of education, state and local healthcare agencies, and state and local housing authorities.

Here on our island, the Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority has already announced reductions in its programs, as well as, reductions in its ability to provide its clients with the quality of service it has developed over the years. The Department of Public Health and Social Services has informed the public that several of its programs, including those providing health services to mothers, infants and children, and those suffering from chronic diseases will be

seriously curtailed if federal funding sources are cut. Several thousand federal workers are also impacted through furloughs for the remainder of this fiscal year, which impacts their take home pay. I believe that we must develop long-term agreements that reduce the deficit in a responsible manner—a solution that must include spending cuts and closing tax loopholes for oil companies and tax subsidies.

## Defense

The security of our nation faces significant challenges ahead, and we must renew our commitment to the realignment of forces in the Pacific. As Guam becomes an even more important part of our Defense posture, we have made significant gains this past year in assuring a positive forward progress and relationship with our military community.

The Department of Defense progress with the rebalance of forces in the Asia-Pacific region remains on track, and our island continues to serve as a critical cornerstone for forces to stand ready to defend our people. It is important to note that the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region is more than just the realignment of Marines from Okinawa to Guam; it involves building resiliency at Andersen Air Force Base to support the continual bomber presence, strike capabilities and robust Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. The rebalance also means repositioning additional Naval forces to the Western Pacific including more fast-attack submarines on Guam. In fact, Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jonathan Greenert, indicates that by 2020 the Navy will position 60% of its entire fleet on the U.S. West Coast or in the Pacific region.

The realignment of Marines is the most tangible program demonstrating the United States' commitment to the rebalance strategy. In a positive step, last year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) rolled back some of the restrictions on spending U.S. and Government of Japan funds. The provision allows for use of Government of Japan funds to plan and design infrastructure that will support the realignment at Andersen Air Force Base. In fact, the bill included \$26 million for the North Ramp utility improvements, which will directly support the Marine Corps aviation component of the realignment. The outcome was not a complete success, but it signaled a willingness of the Senate and leaders in Congress to move forward with the overall realignment. The August 2012 report on the Asia-Pacific rebalance by the Center for Strategic and International Studies went a long way to addressing and alleviating concerns that the Senate had about the realignment. However, we must not let this progress lessen our efforts, in fact it should be a reminder to re-double our efforts and show a continued unified "One Guam" approach for the realignment. The total cost of the realignment remains a concern for some in the Senate, and we cannot let that issue diminish the long-term benefit of the realignment for Guam and our country.

Unfortunately, however, there continues to be strong opposition by certain members of the Senate over civilian infrastructure projects our island needs to support the current military population as well as additional forces as a result of the buildup. Regrettably during Conference negotiations to reconcile last year's NDAA, funding to support our water and wastewater system and build a public health laboratory was cut by certain senators, despite the inclusion of these projects in the House bill and the support of the Obama Administration. The Environmental Impact Statement that studied how the buildup would affect our island specifically pointed out that our water and wastewater system is nearing capacity and needs upgrading, and the increase in military personnel from the buildup will strain the system.

Moreover the construction of a public health laboratory is critical to ensuring that significant bio-hazard threats are identified on Guam.

These modest investments are critical for both military personnel and assets on Guam and our civilian community. I will renew my efforts with the assistance of the Governor and the Legislature to ensure that this build-up moves forward and the federal government pays for the infrastructure needs that they are causing us to undertake. I hope that the leadership change in the Senate Armed Services Committee, in which Senator Jim Inhofe became the Ranking Republican, will give us a fresh opportunity to make our case and that he will recognize the importance of this funding and keep it in the final FY14 defense bill.

The importance of investing resources to ensure that we maintain a strong and robust military presence in the Asia-Pacific region was highlighted this past February when North Korean leader Kim Jong-un made direct threats to the United States and Guam in particular. Although threats from North Korea are not uncommon, and the Department of Defense takes every threat seriously, the rhetoric that was used was uncharacteristically hostile and certain actions by North Korea caused concern among our people and officials at the Defense Department.

I appreciate the swiftness in which the Department of Defense responded to the threats posed by North Korea, in particular the deployment of the Department's only Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, ballistic missile defense system to Guam. I also appreciated the swift personal assurance of General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs that the Pentagon was working to ensure the safety of our island. I have complete confidence in the ability of our Armed Forces to protect our island and maintain regional security in the Asia-Pacific region. In my role as the Ranking Member of the House

Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness, I have been able to help steer how we shape the future of our military's readiness. The DoD remains in complete agreement with the Obama Administration's rebalance in the Asia-Pacific region, and the Department is firmly committed to having a forward presence on Guam. Our island remains a critical component of the Asia-Pacific strategy, but our civilian community will only benefit if we maintain our unified "One Guam" approach moving forward.

The forthcoming supplemental EIS, which will be conducted over the coming year, on the proposed location for a firing range and the housing of Marines is an opportunity for our community to show unity. The supplemental EIS will explore some difficult issues for our community. However these decisions will shape the future of the buildup for years to come. Constructive criticism of the proposals is welcome but we must formulate a final answer on these important issues. The supplemental EIS is a chance for our community to show that we support the realignment and that we can do the buildup in a way that meets military requirements while protecting priorities for our island community.

With my role on the HASC Military Personnel Subcommittee, I have fought hard to support the rights of our military personnel. I have supported efforts to ensure appropriate pay raises for our servicemembers and fought to protect pay incentives for National Guardsmen from the CNMI to travel to Guam for training. I have also been opposed to significant increases in TRICARE fees, premiums and co-pays as a way to balance the DoD's budget. Last year's defense bill halted efforts to increase premiums, and I hope to sustain that effort this year under the leadership of Congressman Joe Wilson, Chairman of the Military Personnel

Subcommittee. We cannot put the burden of balancing the budget on the backs of our veterans and retirees.

## Veterans

Just as I support our current men and women in uniform, I have also worked with members of both sides of the House to ensure veterans are receiving proper care and attention to their needs. Our work on behalf of those who serve our nation continues long after they take off the uniform. We owe it to our veterans to ensure that they receive proper care and attention to their needs and we must renew our commitment to our veterans.

I will work with our Guam Judiciary to establish a local Veterans' Court to help veterans who may have trouble readjusting to civilian life after their service. At times, a veteran's war-time experience may cause underlying issues, such as PTSD, which could be a contributing factor to their brush with the law. Just as the Judiciary's Adult and Juvenile Drug Courts have provided "therapeutic justice" for those who struggle with substance abuse here on Guam, establishing a Veterans' Court will help veterans receive the treatment and counseling they need while providing alternatives to harsher penalties. We honor their service by recognizing their difficult circumstances and treating them with compassion and understanding. I look forward to working with Chief Justice Carbullido, the Judiciary and the Legislature to identify federal and local funding opportunities to establish a local Veterans' Court so that we can provide veterans with the services that they desperately need.

Following Secretary Eric Shinseki's visit to Guam and hearing the concerns of local veterans, I have worked with the VA to include a \$4.4 million dollar expansion of the current Community-Based Outpatient Clinic in their integrated priority list for minor construction. While the funding for expansion was ultimately not included in the President's budget request for Fiscal Year 2014, I will continue to work with the VA to improve the likelihood of funding in future fiscal years. The expansion of the clinic will help to address the concerns of the veteran community and meet the increasing population of veterans on Guam.

In February I hosted Congressman Jeff Miller of Florida, the Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, during a CODEL to Guam. Chairman Miller was visiting the region to look at the many issues facing veterans in the Asia-Pacific region. I will continue to encourage leaders in Congress to visit Guam to better understand the challenges we face. The challenge of providing adequate service and benefits to our veterans is highlighted by the current deployment of over 600 Guam Guardsmen to Afghanistan. I had the privilege to meet with all of them while they were training at Camp Shelby in Mississippi, and I was able to see some of them during a recent CODEL I took to Afghanistan.

Our Guard bravely answered the nation's call to serve, and they have done so with the attitude and outlook that makes us all proud of them. During my visit to Camp Shelby, I was constantly told by Army leaders that the professionalism and dedication of our troops was among the best in the Army. And this is something that I am always told about from military leaders from across the services who have commanded and served with our troops.

Our island was heartbroken once again to learn that two of our Guardsmen, Sergeant Eugene Michael Aguon and Specialist Dwayne Flores, were killed in action earlier this month. These brave soldiers joined the ranks of 21 other men and women from Guam who have paid the ultimate sacrifice since our nation went to war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their photos hang in my

office in Washington, and I am reminded every day of the extraordinary price of freedom. These heroes represent every branch of our Armed Forces, some as young as 19, men and women, Active Duty servicemembers, Guardsmen, and Reservists. Regardless of the capacity in which they served, they all had one thing in common. They volunteered to serve our nation. They volunteered to fight for our freedom. They volunteered to protect our way of life. And they gave their lives for our nation. We owe these brave men and women, and all who have worn the uniform, our humble gratitude and our commitment to upholding the freedoms they fought for. I ask that we recognize all members of our Armed Forces—active duty, guardsmen, reservists—all our veterans, and all those with family serving in our military. We thank you for your service and sacrifice to our nation.

I also want to recognize Rear Admiral Peter Gumataotao who has recently been selected for a second star and will be Commander of Naval Surface Atlantic Force. Congratulations Admiral Gumataotao, we are all proud of you.

## **War Claims**

As we pay tribute to the bravery of our servicemembers who lost their lives defending our freedom, we must never forget the incredible sacrifices and unwavering loyalty of our manamko' who endured a brutal enemy occupation during World War II. Our federal government has a moral responsibility to resolve this longstanding injustice, and I continue to push for the passage of war claims for our manamko'. We renew our dedication to justice for our manamko' and we renew the fight for war claims in the 113th Congress. Indeed the progress that we have made has been significant—passage in the House on five separate occasions, consideration by the full Senate twice, and consistent support from the Obama Administration and the Department of Defense—and I continue to work with my colleagues in both the House and the Senate to resolve this issue.

As we all know too well, we live in a time of fiscal austerity for our island and our nation, where finding a resolution to this longstanding injustice requires us to look for creative solutions that will satisfy fiscal conservatives in Congress. As I have mentioned on numerous occasions, arguments of moral responsibility or justice do little to sway the views of budget conscious members of Congress; these members insist that any legislation that will authorize new spending be accompanied by a corresponding offset within the committee of jurisdiction's authority. What this means is that for war claims to be authorized, we must find an offset within the Department of the Interior that could be used to pay the claims.

To that end, I have proposed using additional Section 30 money above Fiscal Year 2012 levels that Guam will receive from federal taxes remitted to our local treasury as an offset to address objections raised by fiscal conservatives. I believe that this is the most credible offset that will satisfy House Republican budget rules and put us in the best scenario possible to getting war claims passed.

However, I do want to emphasize two things regarding our strategy moving forward. First, I intend for this offset to only be a placeholder that will enable war claims legislation to be authorized by Congress so the Department of Justice can begin the claims process. Once all the claims have been collected and the amount to be paid is known, I will work with the Obama Administration to get an appropriation for the claims in the President's budget. I appreciated the opportunity to testify before the Legislature earlier this year to clarify this point. This is the

strategy that each one of my predecessors would have relied on, and the Obama Administration has consistently supported our efforts to resolve this longstanding issue.

Second, even with the provision to use additional Section 30 funds as an offset, getting war claims legislation passed by Congress remains a difficult endeavor. Many members will continue to oppose war claims for ideological reasons, which makes having a unified voice on this issue even more important. I appreciate that most of our senators from both sides of the aisle joined me in meeting with senior staffers from the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction to discuss my strategy regarding the Section 30 offset. I believe that this discussion was productive and helped to strengthen our "One Guam" approach to war claims. I recognize the concerns that have been raised by members of the Legislature and our community, and I will do everything that I can to ensure that the federal government ultimately pays for these claims. I especially appreciate the work of Senator Rory Respicio and Senator Tony Ada for introducing a resolution supporting my efforts, and I thank the senators who voted in favor of this resolution, Senators Tom Ada, Frank Aguon Jr., Chris Duenas, Brant McCreadie, Tommy Morrison, Tina Muna-Barnes, Dennis Rodriguez, Judi Won Pat, and Aline Yamashita. This was an important vote for Team Guam. I will continue to fight for war claims for our manamko'; I will continue to find solutions to every obstacle; and I will never give up this fight.

## **Visa Waiver**

I also continue my efforts to secure expansion of the Guam-CNMI visa waiver program to include Chinese visitors under parole authority. We have made progress over the past year to get past bureaucratic obstacles. The Governor and I, working with stakeholders in the visitor industry, including DFS, were able to get the Department of Defense to endorse our efforts provided that security concerns were appropriately addressed and mitigated in final implementation by the Department of Homeland Security. This is an important milestone because we were able to better understand the security concerns in this decision-making process.

I remain convinced that there are ways to appropriately mitigate the security concerns posed by visa free travel for Chinese visitors. Make no mistake that the security concerns are valid and must be addressed and taken seriously. Moreover, the current security environment with China is difficult particularly given the recent news over cyber espionage. The challenge is not insurmountable, but it is significant. Yet, I remain concerned about the timeline for action by the Department of Homeland Security. The decision to bring parity to our regional visa waiver program is solely at their discretion. Not until Guam and CNMI have access to the same tourist markets will the economic benefits of this program become realized. As such, I was successful in including language in the FY14 Homeland Security appropriations bill that urges DHS to reengage in meaningful discussions to mitigate the security concerns. Inclusion of this language is evidence that Congress wants the original intent of the legislation to be followed by DHS. It is time to get on with this process and bring finality to this matter.

To date, we have seen the positive outcomes of expanded visa free travel for Russian visitors – a decision made by President Obama in 2011. GVB has reported significant increases in the number of visitors from Russia and the tourism market on Guam has seen a marked rebound as Japanese visitor numbers continue to recover since the lows right after the earthquake and tsunami. I believe that we can find the right balance between economic opportunity and security concerns. I will continue to work with the Governor and stakeholders to bring parity between the CNMI and Guam to our regional visa waiver program.

## Compact-Impact

The fiscal realities in Washington have forced every member of Congress to reevaluate our strategies on policies that affect our districts, and perhaps no other pressing challenge for our community is as evident as the need to look for creative solutions to Compact-impact. The political dynamic over the past few years has shifted so dramatically that even our nation's most important programs and policies—such as national defense and social safety net programs—have been subjected to deep cuts. The federal government simply does not have the money to support every obligation we have, and the tone in Washington is to cut spending at every level of government.

These challenges have forced Members to come up with new ways to address our constituents concerns, and on Compact-impact I have proposed language in a territorial omnibus bill that would expand on language I sponsored in the 2010 NDAA that permits the government of Guam to utilize unreimbursed Compact-impact as an offset to purchase the Navy's water and wastewater system. The language I have proposed would require the Secretary of the Interior to certify the amount of unreimbursed Compact-impact that the affected jurisdictions have incurred and credit this amount as in-kind contributions for local matching requirements for federal programs. I thank Senator Pangelinan for working with me on this particular initiative for the past few years.

I will continue to work with key leadership in the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction on this idea, and we continue to make substantial progress towards its fruition. And I also want to acknowledge the leadership of Ranking Member Kilili Sablan, who has worked closely with me on this proposal and who fully supports its enactment.

I recognize that no single effort will fully address the issues of Compact-impact, and I have joined my colleagues in cosponsoring legislation that address different aspects of the Compacts. Our efforts signify a unified position that our local governments should not be expected to bear the full costs of negative consequences due to Compact migration.

Our omnibus bill will clarify the intent of Congress regarding the eligibility of Compact migrants to receive public housing assistance. Until recently, the Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority had given priority to U.S. citizens when they provided housing assistance to families here on Guam, much of which is reliant on federal funding. The Department of Housing and Urban Development notified GHURA that this was in contravention to federal law and prohibited GHURA from prioritizing U.S. citizens before migrants. Our bill will clarify the original intent of the language that made F-A-S migrants eligible for these programs and will give our citizens first priority for housing assistance.

Despite the budget rules established by House Republicans, I do continue to seek increases in annual Compact-impact assistance. I have joined my colleagues, Congresswomen Colleen Hanabusa and Tulsi Gabbard from Hawaii, and Congressman Eni Faleomavaega from American Samoa, in introducing a bill that would increase annual Compact-impact assistance to costs reported in a GAO report released in 2011. This bill increases annual Compact-impact assistance to the affected jurisdictions from \$30 million to \$185 million per year beginning in 2013.

I appreciate the Legislature's efforts to bring attention to the need for increased Compact-impact funding for our island. However, I will caution that the Resolution 135-32 that was proposed will not satisfy House Republican rules, which prohibit members from earmarking funds directly to their district. The days when members could channel funding for specific projects are gone.

I am also working with my colleagues to reduce the impact of the Compacts on our island's health care system, and I am a cosponsor of legislation introduced by Congresswoman Colleen Hanabusa that would make Compact migrants eligible for Medicaid outside of the cap. Earlier this month, I supported an amendment to the Senate's immigration reform bill offered by Senator Maize Hirono that would also make F-A-S migrants eligible for Medicaid outside of the cap. This amendment, if enacted into law, would make a significant step in reducing the local burden of providing health care to Compact migrants. As such, several of my colleagues and I in the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus signed a letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee urging senators to support this amendment. The committee agreed to the amendment and included it in their markup of the immigration bill, which will be considered by the full Senate in the coming months.

We also raised an issue with Assistant Secretary Babauta regarding overcrowding at the Department of Corrections, where currently one-third of our prison population is made up of FAS migrants. I appreciate the leadership of Vice Speaker Cruz, and I hope to work with the Legislature and the Governor on a concept wherein FAS migrants convicted of minor and nonviolent crimes may be given the option to serve out their sentences in their country of origin. This would require close coordination with the FAS states, law enforcement, the courts, and the Department of the Interior.

## **Health Care**

In May of last year, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act and cleared the way for this law to be fully implemented throughout the country. This landmark reform of our health care industry contained many important provisions for Guam, including the ability for young adults to continue to be covered by their parent's insurance until they are 26; the removal of lifetime limits that an insurance provider will pay for care; the full coverage of many preventive services, such as annual physicals and mammograms; and the prohibition on insurance companies from denying coverage based on a pre-existing condition or dropping coverage if a person becomes sick.

The law provided Guam with \$268.3 million in additional funds for our Medicaid program between fiscal years 2012 and 2019, and it gave the territories the flexibility on whether to establish a local insurance exchange or use additional funds to further expand Medicaid. It also increased the ratio of what the federal government will pay for Medicaid to 55 percent, a percentage that I continue to work with my colleagues to increase to provide parity between the territories and the states.

Despite the many improvements the ACA made to improving quality and access to health care, I recognize that the law is not perfect, and navigating through how the various provisions apply to Guam has been a challenge for local stakeholders. My office works closely with the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that these questions are answered, and I continue to work with local policymakers and stakeholders to ensure that the original intent of the health care law is realized by our people. In this regard, I commend Senator Rodriguez and



our healthcare practitioners and professionals for their leadership in making sure that our community realizes the full benefits of the ACA and for leading local efforts to implementing this law here in Guam.

## **Taxes**

There is growing momentum in Congress to reform the federal tax code, which could have serious implications for our community. Since the passage of the Organic Act in 1950, Guam's income tax laws have mirrored the Internal Revenue Code, which is designed for a national economy and which is not a perfect fit for our local economy.

Our island has been fortunate that under the Obama Administration, my colleagues from the territories and I have been successful in ensuring that five different tax credits have been paid for by federal grants to our local treasuries. However, I also realize that other credits, especially the Earned Income Tax Credit, which has become our local government's largest tax liability, continue to cost our local treasury millions of dollars per year. Despite numerous attempts of the territorial delegates to pass legislation to provide a cover-over for these credits, the fiscal climate in Congress makes passage of these bills difficult.

Now may be the time for our local leaders to reevaluate whether it is prudent for Guam to continue to mirror the IRC or if we should create our own tax code that specifically addresses local needs and is not subject to Congress's consideration of national needs. I applaud the efforts of Senator Mike Limtiaco and Senator Mike San Nicolas to further study whether Guam should develop its own tax code and delink from the mirror code system. I will support the decision of our local policymakers, but a renewed interest in Congress to reform the tax code may lead to additional burdens on our local treasury. Now is the right time to begin a dialogue on delinking from the federal tax code. Let us renew our resolve to put Guam on a firm tax foundation for our future.

## **Education**

Sequestration forces us to renew our dedication to education. The Guam Department of Education, under the leadership of Superintendent Jon Fernandez, is doing a remarkable job of providing quality education under challenging circumstances. If we want our island's next generation to succeed, we must renew our investment in their education and quality of learning. Partnerships between community colleges and local industries will keep our economy strong. When President Obama proposed a Community College to Career Fund in his State of the Union address last year, I supported his proposal. I also led an effort to ensure the territories are fully included in and have equal access to these funds. Given our economic challenges, investing in higher education is vital to adequately train Guam's next generation of workers and entrepreneurs.

Just last month, four students from Simon Sanchez High School participated in the 12th Annual ProStart Invitational held in Baltimore, Maryland. The ProStart program reaches 95,000 students in 1,700 high schools from across the country, and tests students' skills, talents, and passion for the culinary arts. This year's competition encompassed students from 43 states and the territories, and Team Guam placed first among all participating high schools from across the country. Tonight I would like to recognize our national champions from Simon Sanchez High School, Angelica Sia, Airen Magday, Leyann Lusung, and Mac Daniel Dimla, and their culinary advisors Norman Aguilar, Marivic Schrage, and Peter Duenas.

Congratulations on this extraordinary accomplishment; you have made our island very proud. Guam has had to do more with less and I continue to work for equitable treatment of the territories under the Federal TRIO program. TRIO assists disadvantaged students throughout our community to promote college access, retention, and graduation. I have long opposed cuts to TRIO and will continue to work with other members of Congress to restore full funding so every student will have an opportunity to pursue higher education.

To make higher education accessible to any student regardless of their financial situation, Congress passed the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, significantly reducing the interest rate on Stafford student loans from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent over a four-year period. If Congress does not act, however, this temporary interest rate cut will return to 6.8 percent, and I have joined my colleagues in cosponsoring two bills to keep these rates from doubling. I will continue to support federal legislation that keeps college affordable across the country, and I commend the efforts of UOG's Student Government leaders for working with UOG President Underwood, Governor Calvo, and the Legislature to keep UOG's tuition rates affordable for students here in Guam.

## **Chamorro Culture**

In order for our island—our families and businesses—to move forward and thrive, we must once again renew our commitment to protect and promote our indigenous Chamorro culture and language. The federal government provides many grant opportunities for cultural and language preservation, and I commend the numerous non-profit organizations and government agencies for their efforts to utilize these opportunities. We must take advantage of every opportunity available to ensure that the current generation is not the last to pass on our native Chamorro language and culture.

## **Natural Resources**

Working to protect our island heritage includes protecting our environment and natural resources. In 2011, I introduced the Shark Conservation Act, which was signed into law, making five endangered species of shark and two species of manta ray subject to international trade regulations. The President has also pledged his commitment to the environment by including \$4 million dollars for brown tree snake control on Guam and over \$27 million dollars to assist with coral reef conservation across several agencies in his budget request for fiscal 2014. Additionally, I am working to amend the Sikes Act to provide the Department of Defense with greater flexibility to enter into cooperative agreements to meet conservation and readiness goals.

I have also re-introduced legislation to reauthorize and enhance the Coral Reef Conservation Act. Coral reefs are an important economic resource and provide protection from hurricanes and typhoons. However, I remain concerned about NOAA's effort to list several species of coral as endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. I will continue to work with Congressman Sablan to provide oversight of this regulatory action. I applaud the effort by NOAA to protect coral but I am concerned that listing coral under an ESA action does not address the fundamental issues impacting our coral. The ESA listing may have a detrimental impact on our tourism industry.

The Coral Reef Conservation Act will redirect the federal government's efforts on initiatives that I believe will better address impact to corals without adversely affecting local communities. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act is scheduled for

reauthorization this year. The Act protects our fisheries, prohibits foreign fishing fleets from our waters, and helps rebuild depleting fish stocks. We must wisely manage and protect these resources, carefully balancing conservation with the economic impacts to our fishermen. I thank Manny Duenas of the Guam Fisherman's Coop for his help in highlighting fishing regulation issues for Guam. To further protect our fishermen, I have re-introduced the Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Enforcement Act. Illegal fishing activity is high in the Western Pacific and stopping foreign poaching will ensure that our fish stocks are protected, our stock assessments are accurate, and our fishermen will continue to have access to the best fishing grounds in the Pacific.

## **Keep Guam Good**

I call on our community to renew our commitment to fight outside interests who are looking for every which way to bring casino gambling to Guam through repeated ballot measures. These outside interests with their deep pockets have been rejected and rebuked 5 times by our people. I commit to working with our people and our local leaders to review the federal laws to determine if more can be done to protect our island against the relentless onslaught of those outside interests who will never stop until they wear us down and establish their casinos. They just don't get that no means no. So tonight we say to these outside interests, "No and no more."

## **Self-Determination**

While we have covered many issues tonight, I want to end by re-addressing the first point that I raised in this speech because it is the most important point. Resolving our political status through a legitimate act of political self-determination will allow our people to determine for ourselves what is best for our island and our people. This decolonization process is perhaps the single most important long-term priority for our island, and we must renew our commitment to making this effort.

While over the years we have made progress on advancing this issue, sometimes our long-term goals get lost among the many priorities and crises of the day—issues that demand our immediate attention. However we cannot let our daily challenges inhibit our progress toward resolving the issue of political status.

Our self-determination vote will be a multistep process that will include our whole community. But we must also be respectful of the right of the indigenous people of Guam—the Chamorro people—to have their own say on how they would like to see our island move forward. I commend the efforts of Senator Pangelinan to develop the Chamorro registry and encourage eligible residents to sign up.

I believe that the Chamorro vote is a legitimate step in the process toward decolonization. However, it is my hope that the Governor and Legislature can lay out a process that will satisfy concerns raised by those who are not eligible for the Chamorro vote. It would be better if we can find the solutions to this issue ourselves as a community instead of having a solution dictated to us by a court.

During last year's election, Puerto Rico conducted a plebiscite, and my colleague Congressman Pedro Pierluisi, Puerto Rico's Resident Commissioner to Congress, recently introduced federal legislation to take the next steps. Certainly the process and ballot measure used by Puerto Rico may not be what is best for us. But we should use their experience to

inform our efforts and we can observe how their people are responding to the process that they have laid out.

It is time for us to get on with our own process. I appreciate that Governor Calvo has empanelled the Commission on Decolonization and that Speaker Won Pat and Vice Speaker Cruz have raised the profile of this issue in the Legislature and in our community. This is an important dialogue for our community to engage in and it is important that that dialogue become a priority for our people. We are on a journey but that journey will not be completed until we define our destination for our island and our people.

## **Conclusion**

Last year, I asked that we gather around the kitchen table to have a frank discussion on the issues affecting our island. As a community we have experienced, and successfully met, many challenges because we, as a people, are strong and resilient. Though we may each view our experiences and challenges as individuals, perhaps in differing lights and perspectives, we have always had the patience, the fortitude, and resilience to come together to work as a family.

Our culture, our history, and the wisdom of our manamko' have always taught us to believe in ourselves and to be strong in our convictions; to always respect each other; and to work towards a brighter and more prosperous future for our children.

During times of adversity, when our community was challenged by the horrors of war, the fury of mother nature, and world forces beyond our control, we always had faith in ourselves and faith in each other. During those times, our minds and hearts always focused on the common good.

After World War II, many witnessed the renewal of faith of that generation who survived the horrors of occupation, and developed the foundation for the community we have today. And so in the spirit of that generation—our greatest generation—let us renew our faith in each other that we may build an even greater community for tomorrow.

It is in this perspective that I ask—that I call—for a renewal of our faith in each other and in our people, so that we will pursue, together, common purposes and common goals. In continuing to support the military presence on Guam, let us renew our faith in our people and each other to strengthen our "One Guam" voice that will be heard by all. In addressing our political, social, and economic aspirations and needs, let us renew our faith in ourselves in order to achieve the best for our island, our home.

And finally, Governor it has been a pleasure working with you these last two years. Speaker Won Pat and Senators thank you for your gracious hospitality tonight and your good working relationship. I also want to thank the Mayors Council of Guam, its past president, Mayor Melissa Savares, and the current president, Mayor Paul McDonald, and all the fine Mayors and Vice Mayors who have been great partners.

Thank you. Si Yu'os Ma'ase. May God Bless Guam. May God Bless the United States of America.

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