

Won Pat asks Congress to address Guam war claims

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Variety News Staff

SPEAKER Judith Won Pat has joined Guam Delegate Madeleine Bordallo and other officials in support of S. 1237, the Omnibus Territories Act.

The measure was heard before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources over the weekend.

Won Pat was invited to submit testimony on the measure and urged Congress to act quickly on Guam war claims, which was first raised by her father in his capacity as Guam's first delegate to Congress in 1973.

Every delegate since then has raised the issue of war reparations in the U.S. Congress.

Won Pat also told senators that the number of surviving members of "Guam's Greatest Generation," who endured the pain and suffering of an occupied land by enemy forces during World War II some 69 years ago, lessens with each passing year.

"Please do not wait for dozens more to die before they, and those who have gone before them, are recognized and acknowledged as



Speaker Judith Won Pat has urged Congress to act quickly on Guam war claims, which was first raised by her father in his capacity as Guam's first delegate to Congress in 1973. Variety file photo

loyal and patriotic Americans," Won Pat said in her testimony. She added, "This coming July 21, 2013, our island community will celebrate its 69th Liberation Day Parade. We will honor our WWII survivors and celebrate our country's men and women in uniform from each military branch. Honorable gentlemen and ladies, take this

occasion to grant the remaining few, the parity and recognition of a grateful nation."

The Speaker also reminded Congress that the U.S. has compensated other claimants affected by WWII. For instance, U.S. Public Law 100-383 provided a provision to pay restitution to civilian Japanese American Citizens

and Nationals in America who were interned during the conflict.

"In 2009, President Barack Obama established the WWII Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, with nearly \$200 million in funds to compensate Filipino soldiers who fought

alongside American soldiers," Won Pat said.

"Moreover, in the peace treaty with Japan at the end of WWII, the United States government promised to pay any future claims of persons who endured the sufferings of WWII at the hands of Japanese forces, including claims from Guamanians," she added.

Decolonization...

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nation 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," she added.

17 colonies

Guam is one of the 17 remaining colonies in the post-colonial period.

"The [United Nations] made an aggressive statement this year – that they want to rid the world of colonialism," said Decolonization Commission Executive Director Edward Alvarez, who attended the UN decolonization meeting in Ecuador in May.

"For the first time in over 20 years, a U.S. delegate showed up at the decolonization meeting," Alvarez said.

That's a good start, he said, but Guam can't get too excited too soon, Alvarez said.

"When we see the UN and the U.S. send a delegation to Guam, that's when we get excited. Hopefully, that would start the whole process," he added.

Guam looks to its sister territory, Puerto Rico, which is a step ahead. It held its

own political status plebiscite last year and is now awaiting the next process. The action taken by its fellow colony has given Guam new impetus to calls for self-determination—a recurring buzzword that always hangs in limbo.

When he ran for office in 2010, Gov. Eddie Calvo set a goal to hold a self-determination plebiscite by 2012.

But the efforts toward decolonization are marred by a tortured process, challenged by a lack of information about what the yet-to-be scheduled plebiscite entails. The existing challenges are compounded by a pending appeal of a federal court's dismissal of a lawsuit that seeks to nullify a public law that defines a "native inhabitants" vote.

"Misinformation"

"There has been a lot of misinformation about this whole issue," Alvarez said.

"People have the impression that Chamorros are fighting for their right to self-determination: the right has already been given by the United Nations through the UN charter, which the United States signed off on, agreeing that places like Guam have the right to choose what kind of political relationship they want with the administering power (the U.S.)."

Guam has three political status options:

statehood, independence, and free association with the U.S. – similar to the compacts with Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands.

The plebiscite has been postponed indefinitely, pending completion of the Chamorro Registry which is the subject of the lawsuit filed by Arnold "Dave" Davis.

No funds

"Although a lot has been done, we are not yet at the level where we should be at. We need to start the education process," Alvarez said.

But the Commission on Decolonization, which is in charge of public education, is financially handicapped and thus unable to perform its mission, he said.

The commission operates on a bare-bones budget, allocated for salaries and other necessities.

"We have no money for a public education program and governance study," Alvarez said.

Besides, the education campaign would require at least \$1 million. Alvarez also said the commission needs \$30,000 for the governance study that would provide the United Nations with a complete overview of Guam's situation as a Non-Self-Governing Territory.

back then, that particular demonstration and the fact that they were able to successfully do that was a demonstration to us that they have the ability to put something into a larger ballistic orbit," he said. "Now, whether they can successfully take that technology and mate it with where they are in their nuclear program has not

been demonstrated."

The topic was among those that ranged from the recovery of the remains of U.S. service members in Vietnam, to relations with India and the Philippines, to policy and potential confrontations with China, and to the impact of sequestration on the military's readiness.

North Korea...

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time I believe, though, is their continued pursuit of a nuclear capability."

While he doesn't have a crystal ball, he said, based on that history, "there would likely be"

another provocation. "Clearly, the position, I think, for all countries in the region and certainly our country is that North Korea must be committed to total denuclearization, and a complete and verifiable plan to that," he said. "And that's kind of the bottom line entry of how you would get into a broader set of negotiations

with North Korea at this time."

He also said he has not seen a "credible demonstration" of the touted capabilities of North Korea's middle-range Musudan missile or longer range ICBMs. "Even though when you extrapolate what they referred to as a satellite launch a few months ago, as we went through this discussion

Editorial

Suing Uncle Sam

COMPACT-impact funds are insufficient, the federal government withholds payments for our hospital needs, and once again we are hearing talk of filing suit against Washington to get what we think we are owed. That's been tried before regarding the Compact-impact money, with mixed results.

The court process is expensive and time-consuming, but Gov. Eddie Calvo was said to be ready to go to court against Uncle Sam if the garnishment of money owed to Guam Memorial Hospital was not released. He called the action of withholding Medicare funds "unconscionable," and said he would take them to court. Fortunately, the funds were released.

But there's always that notion – that we can go to court and sue to get what we think we have coming.

The problem with that is there is no agreement between our local leaders and the feds over what we are owed. We think we are owed hundreds of millions in uncompensated Compact-impact funds, but we do get some of the Compact-impact money each year, so we're not being stiffed entirely. Plus, under our unique territorial relationship with Washington, we get to keep 100 percent of the federal taxes paid here, and even get a big check in Section 30 funds representing the taxes paid into the national treasury by military and other federal personnel stationed here.

There's the problem. We have trouble drumming up much sympathy in Congress after lawmakers get the real picture: "How much does Guam contribute to the national treasury?" they'll ask. Uh, nothing, actually. Not a dime.

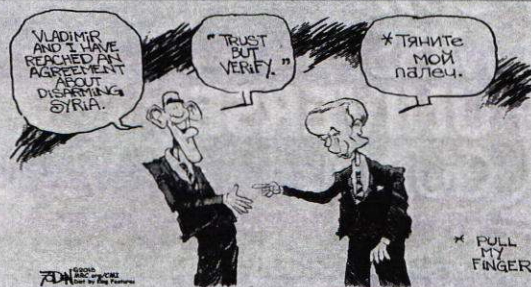
There are governors in some of the states who would give their left arm for such a deal. We collect taxes at the same federal rate as is collected elsewhere, but the money stays here – all of it. In addition, we receive grant money and things such as highway funds that go far beyond what is collected.

The result is we here on Guam have some of the lowest tax rates of anywhere in the country. Our low property taxes are legendary. We have no territorial income tax. We have no sales tax. Our gross receipts tax is only 4 percent, compared with 8 to 10 percent in many parts of the mainland for similar use or excise taxes.

Little wonder, then, that senators and members of the House of Representatives kind of look at each other askance when we ask for more money. You have plenty of money, they say. What do you do with it all?

Well, we may hire some lawyers with some of it, and sue you. That will show Washington we mean business.

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Sen. Ben Pangelinan

• ben's Pen: The Whole Truth Be Told



The perpetuity of Chamorro homelands

THE 2nd Marianas History Conference, "One Archipelago. Many Stories: Integrating Our Narratives," was held Aug. 30 and 31 at the University of Guam. It was a well-attended conference with a good, diverse and inspiring mix of presenters and attendees. The conference did what a history conference should do, inspire us to remember those events that have gone before us and create new ways of interpreting so that we are better able to hold true to the values that really matter.

I had the opportunity and pleasure to present on my experiences over the years, most particularly dealing with the Chamorro Land Trust.

There is a familiar Native American quote that we've come to know: "We do not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors, we borrow it from our Children." The phrase we have here is similar. We're not too sure about borrowing, but we know what belongs and where we belong. On land, I would characterize our beliefs as, "The Land does not belong to us. We belong to the Land."

It is that soul and that spirit, that *anti*, that gave birth to the Chamorro Land Trust here on Guam, through a man named Paul J. Bordallo, a former senator who authored the Chamorro Land Trust Act. The legislation was enacted in 1975, and mandated all public lands, not specifically designated for public use within three (3) years, would be deeded to the Trust for distribution among indigenous people of Guam through 99-year leases.

The intention of the Trust was to make sure that the lands are held in perpetuity for the Chamorro people, in order that every Chamorro, no matter where he or she is on this planet, can come back to this place called Guam, and through land, be rooted here. That really was the concept behind the Chamorro Land Trust. Without the Trust, Chamorros are and will continue to be the landless in their own homelands.

For close to 20 years the law lay dormant. And what we saw happening during that time was purposeful inaction. In the 1990s Nasion Chamoru, through the leadership of former Sen. Angel Santos and Ed Benavente, again highlighted the landlessness of the Chamorros, the injustice of the land takings by not only the military, but the government of Guam itself, and they began to inform the public of the old Chamorro Land Trust law.

Angel demonstrated that the power is in the hands of our people. He galvanized the people on street corners passing out fliers. They were broadcasted in the news, where man 'amko' would hear and see Nasion Chamoru members explain

what laws they wanted implemented. They were nonviolent, non-threatening and popular with our elders and the youth; they walked the streets, the malls, and grocery stores in a petition campaign that culminated in numerous signatures asking the governor to appoint board members to the Chamorro Land Trust. Angel Santos took the governor to court and in June 1992 a Superior Court decision ruled to uphold the validity of the Chamorro Land Trust Act and ordered then-Gov. Ada to appoint the commission members.

The Chamorro Land Trust Act allows the economies of the 21st century to work with the development of property today, but it also maintains one basic feature – it will always be available to a Chamorro, defined in statute as any person who became a U.S. citizen by virtue of the authority and enactment of the Organic Act of Guam or descendants of such person. I know it is working because I've visited many of the first generation of Chamorro Land Trust recipients. You will see them building homes and raising their families with the intention that generations to come will benefit from their efforts today.

Like indigenous people around the world, our ancestors before us had a relationship with land that, today, is beyond what we could ever explain in words. All too many of us have forgotten those values, and thus, have exploited our relationship with the land. But I believe there are still a good number of us who maintain and fight to keep that connection – we care for the land, and in turn, the land sustains our families, our lives. What we need is to reinvigorate that connection to the land that was very much alive during all periods of Chamorro history.

We must counter any threats to the land by galvanizing the people to stand and defend, *prutehi yan defendi i tano*. History has shown us that the larger and louder our group is, the more probable that political leaders will listen. I have witnessed that they do listen. These historical actions are not lost forever – they are incited through our memory of what has been threatened and what has been done to counter those threats. It is in this way of remembering that the coming together is possible. And when we hold on to some of those most basic truths – that there is the bond between indigenous people and indigenous land that does not and will not go unchallenged – then the struggle is just and those that come after us will follow our way.

Mantiñi i tano' yata sosteni i taotao; Hold on to the land and we can ensure we sustain our people. Si Yu'us Ma'ase'

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