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60¢ on Guam

Commonwealth bill 'could be last'

'Rethink strategy' if no progress, Underwood says

By JOHN OMICINSKI

Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON — A new Guam-Washington political deal must sink or swim in the 104th Congress, Del. Robert Underwood says.

Barring "significant progress" on Guam's search for a new political arrangement with more sovereignty in 1995-96, "We're going to have to



UNDERWOOD

rethink our strategy," Underwood said in an interview.

"This very well could be the last commonwealth bill," Underwood said as he prepared remarks for a House floor speech later this week to press again for a new political arrangement between Guam and the United States.

"I just don't see us doing this two years from now," he said. "Something different, yes, but not this again ... unless we see some significant progress."

Progress, he said, means Capitol Hill

■ Pentagon says Guam impact was overstated. Page 4

hearings (there have been none on a commonwealth bill) and solid indicators of a detailed U.S. government position.

"The federal government has been either elusive, uninterested or deliberately unclear about its response to Guam," he said.

"If you charted out all the energy put into political status and plotted it on a pie chart, 95 percent would have been expended by Guam and 5 percent by the federal government. Inasmuch as that's where we find ourselves, we are running out of patience."

Statehood is always the standard of

discussion, Underwood said, and that always stalls things.

"We say we'd like to negotiate our own air routes, and we're told, 'Not even states can do that.'" Underwood calls that approach "disingenuous" and also discouraging because it doesn't attempt to recognize Guam's position 7,000 miles from the U.S. mainland and at the center of Oceania.

A clinker in the political-status situation, of course, is the Defense Department's stunning decision to close or shrink island Navy bases, costing Guam 2,104 military jobs and 2,665 civilian jobs — a total of 4,769 — between the years 1996 and 2001.

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Aguon going to Hawaii for heart tests

■ Possible heart attack:

Senator 'doing better,' nursing supervisor says

By JOHN E. SCANLAN

Daily News Staff

Democratic Sen. John P. Aguon was in Guam Memorial Hospital's intensive care unit last night recuperating from a possible heart attack, said Bill Philips, the senator's chief of staff.

"It's not 100 percent clear whether it was actually a heart attack," Philips said yesterday.

Aguon's attending physician is Dr. Vincent Duenas.

Aguon, a 51-year-old Tumon resident, was in the hospital when the attack occurred.

"He wasn't feeling well on Sunday and following his doctor's instructions, the senator was admitted to the hospital for observation. I'd say he was pretty lucky to have been there when he had the attack," Philips noted.

The senator's aide said he spoke with Aguon yesterday and found the legislator in good spirits.

"He was asking me a lot of questions about the office. He seemed to be more concerned with legislative business than with his own condition," he said.

Philips explained the senator needs further heart tests that cannot be performed on Guam.

"He'll be going to Honolulu for those



AGUON

□ See AGUON, Page 4

IN THE FSM

'Lot of people are voting' in legislative elections

■ Problems: Many polling places running out of ballots; Guam residents say they never received their absentee ballots

By FLOYD WHALEY

Daily News Staff

Citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia cast their votes yesterday in legislative elections marked by low non-resident voter participation and incomplete voter registration lists, officials said.

Early results in the election of national and state legislators are expected sometime today, and final results will not be available for several days, National Election Commissioner Moses Santos said by phone from Pohnpei.

Counting of the national ballots was scheduled to begin at 8 p.m. last night in the four states of the Federated States of Micronesia.

All results will then be called into the central counting station in Palikir, Pohnpei, for tabulation, Santos said. Outer islands will radio in their counts, he said.

Santos said he did not have an exact figure on voter turnout, but he believes it is high within Pohnpei because of the strong demand for the 30,000 ballots that were printed.

"A lot of people are voting," he said. "Many polling places are reporting that

□ See VOTERS, Page 4



Michael Henderson/Daily News Staff

Federated States of Micronesia election volunteers Maggie Mesasy, left, and Lalso Pils check names off a registration list at the Tamuning Community Center yesterday while other FSM citizens wait outside the polling place.

Commonwealth



Daily news file photo

Sen. John Aguon speaks at a recent public hearing.

Aguon: No history of heart illness

Continued from Page 1

Philips said. "He's doing better now. He's awake and doesn't look sick anymore," said Juanita Magallanes, nursing supervisor at the hospital. She added that while she didn't know which Honolulu

hospital Aguon will be going to, he most likely won't have to be transported as a patient. "He's certainly in good enough shape to fly to Hawaii without any assistance," Magallanes said.

Sarof said the principle problem facing Chuukese is the stagnant economy that keeps the state's best people away. "We're educated but there's no place for us," said Sarof, who worked as a bank teller in Guam. "There's no jobs."

Voters: Many didn't get ballots

Continued from Page 1

The election has generally proceeded smoothly, but there have been problems such as incomplete voter registration lists that required people to register on the spot, he said. Outside of the country, FSM citizens for the first time voted for national candidates by absentee ballots. Santos said 1,300 ballots were mailed out for non-resident FSM citizens in Guam, Hawaii and elsewhere, but only about 300 were returned. On Guam, FSM citizens voted for state candidates at polling places in Dededo, Tamuning and Mangilao. Last year, hundreds of angry voters were turned away from Guam polling places due to conflicting information about voting times and places.

This year, fewer voters showed up because national candidates were not on the ballot and the scene at closing time in Tamuning was quiet. "Only a few came late and were turned away," said polling place organizer Tino Songeni. FSM voters in Guam complained that they never received their absentee ballots and were not informed about how the new voting system works. "It's very complicated," said Inez Sarof, a Yigo resident who is originally from the Faichuk islands of Chuuk state. "Some people don't have mailboxes. Most of us haven't received our (absentee) ballots."

Jane Paulus, a University of Guam student from Chuuk, said she was not aware of the compact of free association treaty or its implications on the FSM economy. "I'm voting for my dad," she said. Voter Kathy Jason, from the Faichuk islands, said she went to the Tamuning community center to vote for an uncle and a cousin running for state senator. The tradition of patronage voting in the FSM is beginning to weaken among some educated voters on Guam, said Erenca Gruber, president of the Moen Association in Guam. Some people on the island are looking more at the issues, but problems with the complicated new absentee voting procedure makes that pointless.

Navy chief: Job cuts may be overstated

WASHINGTON (GNS) — Guam may lose fewer military and civilian jobs than officially estimated — and fewer than initially considered, Navy officials said Monday.

Navy Secretary John Dalton said the Pentagon's estimate that Guam will lose 4,709 military and civilian positions due to base closures and realignments may be overstated.

He said some of those job losses represent crewmen aboard Navy "prepositioned" ships that are berthed in Guam, but who may live elsewhere or only occasionally pass through Guam.

The Navy describes prepositioned ships as large, civilian-type cargo ships loaded with weapons, supplies and ammunition for use in military operations like Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm or humanitarian operations like those in Somalia and Rwanda.

Those ships can remain in port for months at a time, allowing crewmen to make their permanent homes at other locations. Each ship has a crew of about 30.

Under Pentagon recommendations, prepositioned ships and some other Navy ships and operations would be

transferred to Pearl Harbor.

"Many of those jobs ... may not represent people who are living on Guam, but who are there on a transient basis," Dalton told members of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission. "The job loss on Guam very well may be overstated."

Dalton said he did not know how many jobs are associated with the prepositioned ships, or the number of jobs that may be overstated.

In other testimony during a packed Washington hearing, Dalton told commissioners that the Navy had considered closing Guam's Public Works Center, which employs about 700 workers and supports Navy facilities on Guam.

He said the center was left off the Pentagon's final list of base recommendations because of the large job loss expected from other recommended base closings and realignments.

Dalton said that while additional savings could have been realized from closing the Public Works Center, the facility can remain productive by supporting other military bases on Guam that will remain open, including medical facilities and Andersen Air Force Base.

Underwood: 'Clarity'

Continued from Page 1

The base closings seem certain to hasten or discourage those like Underwood seeking more political distance from Washington. The question remains in which direction the momentum will run as Guam digests the Pentagon plans.

On Capitol Hill, Republican Rep. Elton Gallegly's 1995 game plan for his Native American and Insular Affairs subcommittee does not include Guam commonwealth hearings. But that doesn't mean they won't happen in 1996, the second year of the two-year Congress.

Gallegly is openly opposed to the "mutual consent" ground rules sought by Underwood and other Guam officials as part of the new commonwealth arrangement.

"Until a territory gains distinct sovereignty with the federal government, either within or without the Constitution, the Congress cannot be bound by an

unalterable bilateral pact of mutual consent, in spite of artful craftsmanship," he said on Jan. 31.

Gallegly's opposition doesn't discourage Underwood.

"On the surface, that doesn't look positive, but we have to go into the hearing process to discuss and find out exactly what he means," he said. "We'll have a clearer sense of what's do-able and not do-able."

Indeed, "clarity" comes up a lot with Underwood. Win or lose, pass or fail, he wants this year's debate and negotiation on Guam commonwealth to clear the air on what's possible in the future.

Nonetheless, he said, mutual consent remains a key issue in any Guam-U.S. deal. "Without mutual consent, there's really no reason to proceed," he said, "because you have no political status. Mutual consent is central to the entire issue."

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