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Constitution vote delayed

By JUDY J. MILLER
Daily News Staff

A Nov. 7 ballot asking voters whether they approve of Guam's proposed constitution appears headed for the paper shredder.

The Legislature last night delayed a referendum on the document until June 2, and Gov. Ricky Bordallo, altering an earlier position, was said likely to approve the action.

"The governor would go for the delay as long as there are significant elements in the community who feel that they don't have enough education on the constitution," a governor's spokesman said.

Democratic Sen. Dick Taitano, a Bor-

dallo adviser, said: "I can't see why he (Bordallo) wouldn't sign it (legislation calling for the delay) in view of the limited education campaign." Bordallo several weeks ago said there had been adequate information to the public on the contents of the constitution, a matter now in dispute.

With Bordallo's approval of last night's legislation, a ballot seeking voter ratification or rejection in the territory's history is likely to end up in a printer's wastebasket.

"No problem," said Election Commission Director Al Garbulla who asked what he would do with the thousands of ballots already printed. A

printer will cut the referendum part off the Nov 7 ballot or "We'll have to ignore that portion of the ballot," he said. Some 450 absentee ballots with the constitutional question have already been sent out but those will not be tabulated, he said.

As senators assembled at the Legislature yesterday — once again under the glare of television lights — the vote for a delay seemed assured. Overwhelming support for shelving the document voiced at recent public hearings had led most senators to decide well before yesterday's session to support the delay.

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...and then his second lengthy appearance before the cameras Ada wore a blue shirt carrying the message "Re-elect Sen. Ben Ada."

Legislation allowing the delay eventually passed 19-0. Two senators were absent, Republican Sen. Eddie Calvo and Democratic Sen. Carl Gutierrez.

If the governor signs last night's bill, the Legislature must introduce legislation within 30 days funding a constitution education campaign.

Constitutional Convention officials already have launched an education program anticipating a Nov. 7 vote but critics said voters still remain uninformed and confused about the 14-article constitution written between July and October last year.

A group called the Committee for a More Informed Vote on the Constitution organized the drive for a delay, prompting senators to hold hearings on the matter last week. Thirty-three persons said they wanted the constitution off the

...paign," she said.

Guam Rep. A.B. Won, sponsor of legislation convening the Con-Con, last night said he does not oppose the delay but thinks there was enough time to educate voters on constitutional issues.

"I just don't see what seems to be the cause for further delay," he said, expressing his support for the constitution's eventual adoption.

Won Pat will be on island until just after the Nov. 7 election in which he is unopposed.

Legislation enabling Guam to convene a Con-Con was passed by Congress and then signed by President Gerald Ford in October 1976.

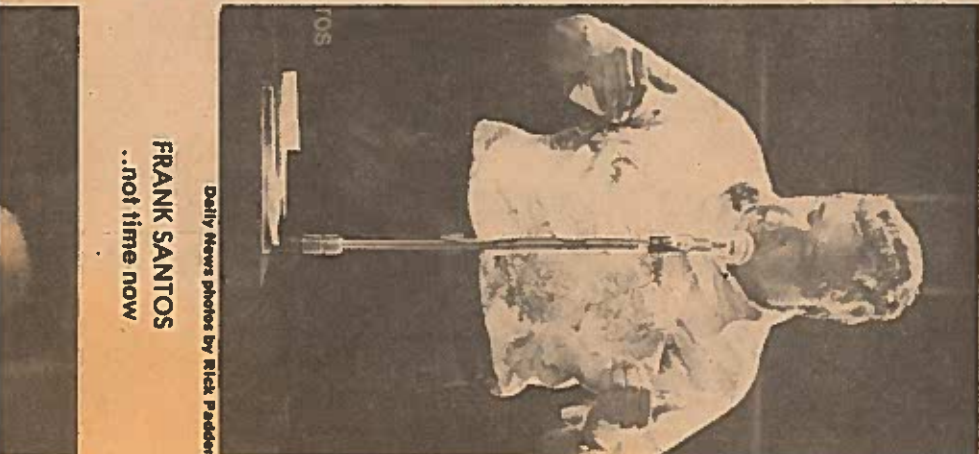
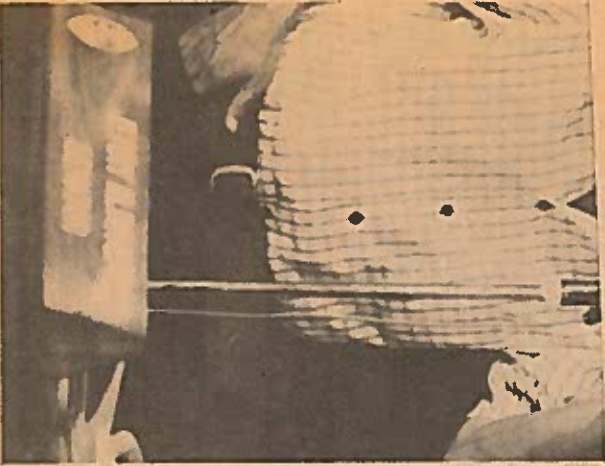
Thirty-two elected delegates, representing Guam's 19 villages, were given from July 1 to Oct. 31 to complete the task of writing a constitution.

In June, the Guam constitution won the necessary congressional approval.

The constitution, if approved, will replace the Organic Act of 1950 as

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Daily News photos by Rick Padden

FRANK SANTOS
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