

# Chamorro Plebiscite

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## Board: July 1 is too soon

### Registry team to suggest date after November

**By Steve Limtiaco**

*Pacific Daily News*

July 1 is an unrealistic date to hold the island's political status plebiscite, according to the group responsible for creating a voter list for the election.

The island's indigenous people are scheduled to head to the polls that day to choose one of three status options for the island's future relationship with the United States. The options are statehood, free association and independence. The non-binding vote will set the course for future status negotiations.

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# July 1: Reports called incomple

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Joe Borja, chairman of the Decolonization Registry Board, said the group will recommend to the Commission on Decolonization that the plebiscite be postponed until some time after November, and that the plebiscite be held as a stand-alone election, instead of being combined with the November General Election. Changing the date would require action by the Legislature.

Borja said the problem is the government's hiring freeze, which has prevented the Guam Election Commission from hiring registrars to register eligible voters at mayors' offices.

"I can't hire these people, and my staff right now is overworked by the people coming in for regular registration," said Gerald Taitano, executive director of the election commission.

The decolonization commission did not meet officially yesterday morning as scheduled because too few commission members were present to form a quorum. Attendance has been a chronic problem for the commission, which has had to can-



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## Leland Bettis

executive director,  
Commission on Decolonization,  
referring to position papers  
prepared by plebiscite task forces

cel or postpone meetings in the past.

Commission Executive Director Leland Bettis said he believes attendance was low at yesterday's meeting because of a legislative oversight hearing that was happening about the same time. Three senators are decolonization commission members.

Although the commission did not meet yesterday, task force members got into a heated discussion with Bettis, who told them some of their position papers are incomplete or inaccurate. The task forces last week submitted their position papers, in which they researched the individ-

ual status options. The papers will be used as part of the public information campaign that will teach voters about the various status options before the election.

"They're not as definitive as I personally would have hoped for," Bettis said, adding that the commission will decide what will happen next.

He said the papers should have included extensive research on Guam's existing status and the evolution to the status each task force proposes for the island. Bettis said it would be difficult to define the work turned in by one of the task

## AT A GLANCE

### Commission on Decolonization members:

- ▲ Gov. Carl Gutierrez
- ▲ Ron Rivera
- ▲ Judge Alberto Lamorena III
- ▲ Sen. Carlotta Leon Guerrero
- ▲ Sen. Mark Forbes
- ▲ Sen. Vicente Pangelinan
- ▲ Mayor Isabel Haggard
- ▲ Chris Perez Howard
- ▲ Marilyn Manibusan
- ▲ Sanjay Sharma
- ▲ Leland Bettis, executive director

forces as a position paper.

Eddie Duenas, chairman of the statehood task force, said he is willing to change the group's position paper only if the commission can convince him that the task force's work is inaccurate. "As far as we can tell, it's factual," he said.

# Customs: Off duty



# Plebiscite

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## What's next

▲ The Commission on Decolonization is scheduled to meet at 10 a.m. today at Adelup to discuss the plebiscite and the reports submitted by task forces. The meeting will be held if enough members attend to form a quorum.

Duenas said it appears the commission wants to edit the task force papers so they say what the commission wants them to say. "I'm not for that," Duenas said.

"The position papers are really working documents of the commission at this point," Bettis said.