

Hafa Adai, It's Saturday

# Board: Postpone vote

By Steve Limtiaco

*Pacific Daily News*

The Commission on Decolonization will recommend that lawmakers postpone the July 1 political status plebiscite until the Nov. 7 General Election.

Commission members yesterday morning voted to ask for the delay, citing administrative problems that have affected the election commission's

ability to register voters and conduct the plebiscite by July 1.

Election Commission Executive Director Gerald Taitano this week said the government's hiring freeze has prevented him from hiring additional registrars for the plebiscite, and said his current staff already is overworked performing its normal responsibilities.

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The plebiscite will allow the island's indigenous residents, as defined by law, to choose one of three political status options for the island, from among statehood, free association and independence. The non-binding vote will be used to set the course for future negotiations with

the United States. The plebiscite date already has been moved back several times, and last year was changed from December 1999 to July 1.

The commission also will request that a massive registration effort take place during the Sept. 2 primary election to register indigenous residents for the political status plebiscite.

It also will ask that Jan. 13 be set

**Chamorro  
Plebiscite**  
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# Vote: Task forces to meet

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aside as the date for a runoff election in the event one is required to decide the plebiscite winner.

Commission Vice Chairman Ron Rivera said, "We're on target. The only thing that keeps changing is the date of the plebiscite." Rivera will meet with representatives from each political status task force to discuss the contents of the position papers the task forces submitted to the commission last week. A task force was created for each status option, to research and advocate those options. Information from the position papers will be used during the ongoing education campaign for the plebiscite.

The task forces were given a list of several issues that must be addressed in their position papers, but commission Executive Director Leland Bettis this week said the papers are incomplete. Some

committees took exception to that assessment of their work.

"All the task force chairmen are concerned about ... the power of the decolonization commission on the way we write our papers," Jose Garrido, chairman of the free association task force, told the commission yesterday.

He said one of the goals of his task force was to produce a document that would be easy for people to read. "It's difficult to be substantive without writing a book on our

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**Ron Rivera**

vice chairman,  
Commission on  
Decolonization

position papers," he said.

The commission also discussed whether it is appropriate for the task forces to conduct village meetings, even though their position

papers have not yet been finalized.

Rivera said his advice would be to stop the meetings, but

committee member Sen. Vicente Pangelinan, D-Barrigada, said the commission instead should step up its efforts to keep pace with the task forces, which have been more aggressive in their campaigns.

Rivera said the committee has been keeping to the schedule it set several months ago.

"We're on target. The only thing that keeps changing is the date of the plebiscite," Rivera said, adding that the commission will not hold a plebiscite until everything is ready. "We're not in a horse race."

**Chamorro  
Plebiscite**

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**WHAT IS IT?**