

Status

Chamorro voters need concrete data to weigh options

It looks like the Chamorro-only political status vote scheduled for July 1 will have to be postponed. There just isn't enough time to conduct an islandwide registration of eligible voters between now and then.

And besides, the bill that sets up the procedures and rules to conduct a Chamorro voter registry hasn't even been signed into law.

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If the governor does sign the bill into law, it will still be a lengthy, tedious process to verify that those who claim to be of Chamorro ancestry can document that.

But that is just part of the problem. The overriding reason that this step toward self-determi-

nation must be delayed is because, regardless of good intentions, there just isn't enough time to conduct a thorough, legitimate education campaign by July 1.

The chairmen of the task forces representing the three political status options— free association, independence and statehood — have said that their research and position papers will be ready to present to the Commission on Decolonization by the March 31st deadline.

But Ron Rivera, one of the commission members, says that it will take a while to evaluate, approve and release the documents to the public. That will eat up even more of the time available to get voters prepared.

People have to remember that this isn't just another political campaign where people stand along the roads and wave at people, throw free barbecues to attract people and canvass the villages for votes — even though that may happen.

What will potential voters learn from that to help them weigh the options?

We need concrete data that can be compared point-by-point among all three options, made available to everyone on this island.

Until all eligible voters have had a chance to sit down at their leisure and evaluate the economic, social, military and other impacts associated with each option, this plebiscite will be a travesty.

We can't allow the future political status of this island — regardless of whether the United States agrees — to be decided by slogans, promises and flamboyant campaign tactics.