

Citizens want more facts

By Adrienne Loerzel

Pacific Sunday News

University of Guam student Ed Pocaigue is interested in Guam's political future — interested enough to venture to the Legislature to listen to testimony on the process of registering voters for the July 1 political status plebiscite.

But, despite his interest in the subject, Pocaigue said he feels that he does not have enough information about the political status options to make a decision five months from now.

"They need more education," the 21-year-old Yona resident said. "I think the election should be moved back at least another two years. Not too many people are aware of what's going on."

Only Chamorros can participate in the plebiscite, a non-binding vote that will determine the course of Guam's future status negotiations with the United States. Identifying and registering qualified voters are the responsibilities of the Chamorro Registry Advisory Board, which reports to the Guam Election Commission.

Campaign on schedule

Leland Bettis, director of the Commission on Decolonization, said a \$100,000 campaign to educate the island about the political status options is on schedule. The first phase is intended to raise interest and awareness, while the second portion of the campaign will present detailed

information about statehood, independence and free association, the options that Chamorros will be asked to choose from.



Leon Guerrero

The first phase ... is kind of an awareness thing," Bettis said. "I don't think people are generally confused."

But, Lucina Leon Guerrero, a 39-year-old government of Guam employee, said she has seen some of the commission's ads and wasn't sure what they were promoting.

"Our culture? Our people? I don't really remember," she said, adding that the commission needs to be more aggressive in its efforts to educate people.

"We don't just sign our names on anything," Leon Guerrero said. "We have to understand ... what it'll do for our economy, number one."

Bettis said all that information will be presented once it has been compiled. Three task forces, with a budget of \$75,000 each, have been created to study the options of statehood, independence and free association



Suzuki

THE PROCESS

Who can vote

▲ Under the proposed rules for registering voters, you are eligible to vote in the July 1 political status plebiscite if you can trace your ancestry to someone who was living on Guam on April 11, 1899, or who was temporarily absent from the island at that time. That definition was taken from the Organic Act. You must also be a U.S. citizen and at least 18 years of age.

How to register

▲ The Chamorro Registry Advisory Board's pro-

posed regulations would require people to submit an application with their full names, mailing and home addresses and an oath that the information is true. Under the proposed rules, the registry would be closed 10 days before the July 1 plebiscite.

Where the proposed registry rules stand

▲ The Legislature and the Chamorro Registry Advisory Board are still trying to work out the best way to register eligible voters. A legislative public hearing on the proposed rules for registering Chamorro voters was held Friday morning.



Ed Crisostomo/Pacific Sunday News

Determining rules for registration: Sens. Marcel G. Camacho and Mark Forbes during a hearing Friday on the Chamorro Registry Advisory Board's proposed rules and regulations for registering Chamorro voters for the July 1 plebiscite.



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Ed Pocaigue
21, Yona resident

Chamorro Plebiscite 2000

and issue reports about what the options will mean for Guam.

Bettis said that information should be ready by the end of March, with the information campaign set to follow in early April.

Barrigada resident Maria Suzuki said she would like to know more about the issue because she has not yet heard or seen any of the commission's ads.

"I listen to the radio all the time and I haven't heard it," she said.

While Suzuki said she would like to vote, she said she does not have

enough information to make a choice between the three options, and would like to know more about

the economic implications of the choices. "I need to hear more about it," said 31-year-old Sean Aguon, a Umatac resident.



Aguon

Aguon said he would not vote in the plebiscite unless more information were made available.

Another issue that has yet to be resolved is the set of rules for registering voters for the plebiscite.

The Legislature's Committee on Rules listened Friday to hours of testimony on the registry board's

Plebiscite to focus on final status

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While many people are still focused on the commonwealth status, which Guam has been trying to achieve for more than 10 years, that issue is not going to be on the ballot in July.

Commission on Decolonization Director Leland Bettis said the July 1 plebiscite focuses on a different issue: Guam's final political status.

Because the years of effort to make Guam a commonwealth yielded no results, Bettis said, the local government is taking a different approach to the political status question. Guam is considered a non-self governing territory by the United Nations, so the island has a right to self-determination.

Under the U.N. definition, a territory can be said to have reached self-government by:

- ▲ Becoming a sovereign independent state;
- ▲ Free association with an independent state; or
- ▲ Integration with an independent state.

These options are the choices that will be presented to Chamorro voters in July, Bettis said.

Because the commonwealth status and the present government system are not considered self-government, they will not be considered in the plebiscite, Bettis said. However, Guam's present situation will be discussed as a benchmark to measure economic, political and social effects of the three political status options, he added.

proposed rules for registering Chamorro voters.

Sen. Mark Forbes, chairman of the committee, said Friday that based on the testimony, the proposed rules may need to be changed.

Senators could have another version of the regulations ready for session in mid-next month, Forbes, R-Sinajana, said.