

# Essay contest focuses on plebiscite

By **Adrienne Loerzel**

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One of the Commission on Decolonization's task forces is gearing up for the July 1 political status vote with an islandwide essay contest.

The plebiscite will allow registered Chamorro voters to choose between statehood, independence and free association, but some have complained that there is not enough information available about the status options.

Local government officials also have said they are concerned that time is getting short to prepare for the plebiscite. The creation of a Chamorro Registry, which will include a list of the people eligible to vote in the July election, is on hold while lawmakers look at the process for registering voters.

Despite the delays, however, officials have said they expect to be ready for the plebiscite in July. Television and radio ads to promote awareness of the vote have been running since early January, with more informational material

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**Tony Sablan**

Task Force on Independence chairman

expected in late March.

In addition to the Decolonization Commission's \$100,000 advertising campaign, three task forces created to study the status options can conduct their own information campaigns. Each task force has a budget of \$75,000.

The Task Force on Independence is using part of its \$75,000 budget to finance an essay contest that will offer \$1,600 in prizes for the top four essays. The task force's chairman, Tony Sablan, said the contest will encourage people to learn more about the plebiscite and the independence option.

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process by participating in it. This is one way that we can open the discussion to non-Chamorros, too," Sablan said in a press release issued Friday. "After all is said and done, an independent Guam would include everyone."

The contest theme is "Lina'la'ta: Why Independence is Best for Guam." One category is open to high school students, while the other is open to everyone on island.

"Many of Guam's newcomers are from independent countries — including the United States of America — and may have perspectives to share that all of us could possibly benefit from," Sablan said in the release.

## THE ESSAY CONTEST

The theme of the essay contest is "Lina'la'ta: Why Independence is Best for Guam." The writer of the winning high school essay will win \$500, with a \$300 prize for the second place winner. A second category is open to the public, with another \$500 first prize and a \$300 prize for second place.

The deadline to submit entries is 5 p.m., April 28. Essays will be judged by a panel of judges from the University of Guam, with awards announced before the July 1 plebiscite.

If you are interested, submit your essay at 623 East Sunset Ave. on Tiyan, or e-mail it to [freeguam@yahoo.com](mailto:freeguam@yahoo.com). For more information, call 475-9821.

## THE PLEBISCITE

**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.

**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.