

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 15-147

RE: C.B. NO. 15-47/J&GO

SUBJECT: TERMS OF CONGRESS

SEPTEMBER 26, 2008

The Honorable Isaac V. Figir
Speaker, Fifteenth Congress
Federated States of Micronesia
Fifth Regular Session, 2008

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations, to which was referred C.B. No. 15-47, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT TO PROPOSE AN AMENDMENT TO SECTION 8 OF ARTICLE IX AND SECTION 4 OF ARTICLE X OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA FOR THE PURPOSE OF INCREASING THE LENGTH OF TERMS FOR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ELECTED FROM CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS IN EACH STATE BASED ON POPULATION TO FOUR YEARS.",

begs leave to report as follows:

The intent and purpose of the bill are expressed in its title.

C.B. No. 15-47 would initiate the process to place on a referendum a proposed constitutional amendment to increase the length of the terms of members representing the election districts in each state from two to four years, thereby making each term of all members of Congress four years. The bill would not affect any changes in the qualifications or selection of the President and the Vice President.

Your Committee held various public hearings on this bill with the leaderships in the various states and, on September 23, 2008, held a hearing in the Hearing Room with Secretaries of the Department of Justice and the Department of TC&I and a representative from the President's Office.

The views of the witnesses in the various hearings are generally the same. Most witnesses agreed with the intent of the bill. The primary reasons in support of the bill were that it would (1) remove the requirement of holding costly elections every two years; thereby making available the funds that would otherwise be used for other useful purposes; (2) relatively curtail the frequency of appropriating public funds for small projects; (3) ensure better continuity in the work of Congress; (4) enable members of Congress to devote more time on long-term projects and programs; and (5) prolong elections and thereby minimize the social problems resulting from the divisive nature of elections in these small island communities of ours.

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Members of the Pohnpei Legislature were concerned that the current election district representatives would not be as responsive to the needs of their respective constituents as they are now. Your Committee finds it interesting to note that their term is four years, also.

Senator Setiro Paul expressed his support of the bill but requested that the term of the at-large representatives be extended to six years. Your Committee decided against this add-on rider on the premise that this may result in the extension of the terms of the President and the Vice President, an issue that your Committee is not prepared to entertain at this time.

Your Committee considered the reasons in support of, and against, the bill and concluded in favor of recommending the approval of the bill as is without any amendments.

Based on the foregoing reasons, your Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations is in accord with the intent and purpose of C.B. No. 15-47 and recommends its passage on First Reading, and that it be placed on the calendar for Second and Final reading.

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Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Peter Sitan

Peter Sitan, chairman

Fredrico O. Primo, vice chairman

Tiwiter Aritos, member

/s/ Isaac V. Figir

Isaac V. Figir, member

Dohsis Halbert, member

/s/ Moses A. Nelson

Moses A. Nelson, member

/s/ Paliknoa K. Welly

Paliknoa K. Welly, member