

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 15-85

RE: C.R. NO. 15-91/HESA

SUBJECT: CONFIRMING THE NOMINATION OF MR. CASIANO SHONIBER TO BE THE SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OF THE FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

FEBRUARY 19, 2008

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

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Health, Education and Social Affairs ("HESA"), to which was referred C.R. No. 15-91 entitled:

"A RESOLUTION CONFIRMING THE NOMINATION OF MR. CASIANO SHONIBER TO BE THE SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OF THE FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA.",

begs leave to report as follows:

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

Mr. Casiano Shoniber has been nominated by the President of the Federated States of Micronesia to be the Secretary of the Department of Education. Title 2, section 207 of the Code of the Federated States of Micronesia sets out that this nomination is subject to the advice and consent of Congress.

First, your committee notes that this is a new Cabinet position, as Education was recently separated from the Department of Health and Social Affairs and established as a department.

Mr. Shoniber's curriculum vitae is included in Presidential Communication 15-128. Some points are summarized here. Mr. Shoniber earned a Masters degree in Education Administration from the University of Hawaii at Manoa in 1991. He has served as the Pohnpei State Director of Education for two terms, from 2000 until 2007. From 1991 until 1999, he was the Pohnpei Chief of Special Education. Mr. Shoniber was a Program Specialist with the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory from 1989 to 1990, the Director of the Micronesian Cultures and Languages Federal Program from 1980 until 1988.

PUBLIC HEARING

Your committee held a public hearing on the nomination in the afternoon of Friday, February 15, 2008. Present were Chairman Urusemal as well as Senators Kansou, Nelson, Sitan, and Suka. Your

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committee met first with the nominee and next with a number of individuals, twenty in total, mostly from both the national and Pohnpei State departments of Education, who came to show their support for the nomination.

MEETING WITH THE NOMINEE

Mr. Shoniber affirmed that he accepts the nomination.

There was a question regarding the education infrastructure in Chuuk which seems to be lagging behind our other states and why carry-over Compact funds for FY 2006 have not been used. Mr. Shoniber responded that, in his view, this is a matter for the Department of Finance.

There was a comment that states are largely responsible for education. The role of the national government is restricted to setting minimum standards for the system of education. The nominee was asked if he would set deadlines for teacher certification. Mr. Shoniber responded he will use some of the methods that have been successful in Pohnpei in the rest of the states. He noted the problem of teacher attendance and stated we should concentrate on conferences for educators in our own nation, rather than traveling internationally.

Mr. Shoniber stated that standards are important and we in the FSM need them, to set "a level of understanding". He noted that Xavier High School in Chuuk is currently the only accredited high school in the FSM.

MEETING WITH WITNESSES

The Acting Secretary of Education said he is happy with the nominee, saying he has worked with him for many years and has always been impressed with the tremendous improvements Pohnpei State has made in Education under the leadership of Mr. Shoniber. Students in Pohnpei, he said, consistently score high in tests. Pohnpei, he stated, also takes the lead in providing services for teachers, encouraging them to complete AS and BA degrees. There are even a few doing online courses of study toward Masters degrees.

There were a number of comments that Mr. Shoniber has the leadership abilities to make the success he has achieved in Pohnpei a reality in our other three states. Mr. Shoniber was described as having a strong and determined personality. He was said to be a person who is

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unafraid to take risks and see difficult projects through to completion.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Written comments have been received, all in support of the nomination. Dr. Richard Wah, former Head of Distance Education at the University of the South Pacific and currently with the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment, writes that he has known Mr. Shoniber for over eight years. He says he is confident Mr. Shoniber would be a good secretary, has leadership experience and determination, endurance and perseverance.

Dr. Marilyn C. Salas, Director of the Center of Excellence for Chamorro Language and Culture at the University of Guam, wrote that she has known Mr. Shoniber for eight years and worked closely with him when he was Pohnpei State's Director of Education. She writes that she has great respect for Mr. Shoniber's leadership in Education, saying he keeps up to date on research and practices in Education, studies, thinks critically and enters into discussions before making decisions. Dr. Salas describes Mr. Shoniber as the "type of person the FSM needs to lead the Department of Education" and calls him a very intelligent person.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above hearings, your committee is satisfied with the qualifications and dedication of the nominee and recommends him with confidence for the position of Secretary of the Department of Education.

Your Committee on HESA is in accord with the intent and purpose of C.R. No. 15-91 and recommends its adoption in the form attached hereto as C.R. No. 15-91.

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Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Joseph J. Urusemal
Joseph J. Urusemal, chairman

/s/ Claude H. Phillip
Claude H. Phillip, vice chairman

/s/ Dohsis Halbert
Dohsis Halbert, member

/s/ Roosevelt D. Kansou
Roosevelt D. Kansou, member

/s/ Resio S. Moses
Resio S. Moses, member

/s/ Setiro Paul
Setiro Paul, member

/s/ Joe N. Suka
Joe N. Suka, member