

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 19-27

RE: C.R. NO. 19-18/EDUCATION

SUBJECT: CONFIRMING THE NOMINATION OF MR. KALWIN
KEPHAS TO SERVE AS THE SECRETARY OF THE
DEPARTMENT.

JULY 27, 2015

The Honorable Wesley W. Simina
Speaker, Nineteenth Congress
Federated States of Micronesia
First Special Session, 2015

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Education, to which was referred C.R. No.
19-18, entitled:

"A RESOLUTION TO CONFIRM THE NOMINATION OF MR.
KALWIN KEPHAS TO SERVE AS THE SECRETARY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR THE FEDERATED STATES
OF MICRONESIA.",

begs leave to report as follows:

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

Your Committee recognizes the importance of the education of
our children, particularly at this challenging point in our
Nation's history, as our Nation's children represent the
future welfare and progress of our nation. The Secretary of
the Department of Education of the National Government of the
Federated States of Micronesia, as the highest national
leadership position, is an enormously important post.

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In order to ensure a quality education for each student the policies and administration of the National Department of Education must be developed, implemented and maintained by an efficient and skilled administration. This administration must, in turn, be led by a Secretary who is a strong, competent individual, one with great personal integrity. It would be in the best interests of our nation if the individual in this position had many years of experience in school administration and leadership at the National level, as well as, an in-depth knowledge of the relevant policy issues.

Your Committee held a hearing on July 16, 2015 with the staff of the Department of Education, including the Acting Secretary of the Department of Education and his staff, representatives from the Office of the President, including the Chief of Staff, a representative from the Department of Justice, and the nominee.

Your Committee notes that a defective nomination for the Secretary of the National Department of Education was transmitted to Congress in May 2015 for this nominee, however, a legally sufficient communication from the President was re-transmitted today for the nominee, and this matter therefore, is properly before the Committee.

Your Committee inquired whether the nominee requested the Vice President or President to put his nomination forward. The nominee stated that he did not seek out this nomination, but was pleased when his name was put forth as a possible nominee. The nominee stated that he was aware that, if confirmed, he would receive a reduced salary from that for his current position as Dean of the COM-FSM campus of Kosrae State, however, he stated that was acceptable and he was happy for the opportunity to serve the Nation. The nominee also stated that he was aware that travel would be involved as Secretary and he would be willing to take the necessary trips.

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The staff and Acting Secretary of the Department of Education are familiar with the nominee and express their general support for him. The President's Chief of Staff joined the Department in emphasizing that the nominee was very qualified. The nominee spoke on his own behalf stating that his 19 years of teaching and administration experience at the K-12 grade level, combined with an additional 19 years of experience at the post-secondary level give him both the experience necessary for the position of Secretary of the Department of Education, and also a unique insight into the challenges facing our students at all stages of their education experience.

The nominee stated that he knows that there will be no quick fix for the many challenges our education system is up against, however, he intends to review the Department completely, and revise/restructure where necessary. The nominee placed emphasis on understanding the current generation of students who, the nominee believes, have a different approach to learning due to their much-increased use of digital equipment and technology in general. The nominee stated that he would prioritize teacher and administration development if confirmed.

Several members of the Committee inquired as to the nominee's position on vocational education. Members of the Committee were concerned that our Nation's students be given the opportunity to learn trade skills and life skills that would assist them in finding jobs, and generally prepare for adult life. The nominee stated that he felt vocational education was important and should be held to the same high standards of other academic education.

The nominee was questioned as to his plans for restructuring NDOE, particularly in light of funding and activities being transferred to the States. The nominee

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stated that he would have to make a complete review of the Department before making any decision as to restructuring.

A recurring issue brought up by the Committee is the gap; a gap that many feel is growing, between the performance of the private and public schools. The nominee acknowledged the performance gap, but stated that there is a place for private schools in the FSM, however, his work would be to ensure that the performance of our public schools is increased.

The Chairman of your Committee, as well as, several members questioned the nominee on specific issues regarding the priorities of teacher certification, school accreditation, and teacher and student testing. The nominee stated that he was in favor of teacher certification, however, was concerned that if non-certified teachers were forced out of the workplace there would not be sufficient qualified teachers to come in as replacements. When questioned regarding other specific JEMCO resolutions and policies the nominee stated he did not have specific information or statistics, but of course would study the National situation in detail if confirmed. The nominee stated that he felt comfortable with his ability to quickly understand the relevant issues. The nominee emphasized that as a career-long education specialist and administrator he is familiar with the challenges facing our Nation's students.

Members of your Committee also inquired as to nominee's ability to lead NDOE and set policy for the Nation's education system, specifically as to his ability not to discriminate and to conduct himself with the appropriate tolerance, which should be exercised by the Secretary of NDOE. The nominee is a leader in his community church, and there was concern by the Committee whether he would be able to conduct himself in a diverse National, and when called upon international, stage. The nominee acknowledged that he that his religion played a significant role in his life,

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however, when questioned he stated if confirmed that he was willing to follow the constitution of this Nation and the guidance of the Department of Justice.

Your Committee has not received any subsequent communication from any individual or organization that would cast doubt on the performance or integrity of this nominee. Further your Committee defers to the President and the Department as to the decision to put forward this nominee. Absent any contrary indication, your Committee believes this nominee should be confirmed, and so recommends that Mr. Kalwin Kephas be confirmed to the position of Secretary of the Department of Education of the National Government of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Your Committee would like to offer the following amendment to C.R. No. 19-18 to read as follows:

1. Page 1, line 15, delete "Regular" and insert "Special" in lieu thereof.

Your Committee on Education is in accord with the intent and purpose of C.R. No. 19-18 C.D. 1, and recommends its adoption in the form attached hereto, as C.R. No. 19-18, C.D.1.

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Respectfully submitted,

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

/s/ Ferny S. Perman
Ferny S. Perman, vice chairman

/s/ Florencio S. Harper
Florencio S. Harper, member

/s/ Bonsiano F. Nethon
Bonsiano F. Nethon, member

/s/ Paliknoa K. Welly
Paliknoa K. Welly, member

/s/ Wesley W. Simina
Wesley W. Simina, member

/s/ Berney Martin
Berney Martin, member