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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF INSULAR AFFAIRS

Governor Babauta receives \$830,030 Dollars for the CNMI

(September 25, 2002, Washington, D.C.) Today approximately \$800,000 Dollars in Department of the Interior grants were handed to the Governor and Resident Representative of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) by David Cohen, the Interior Department's Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Office of Insular Affairs.

Taking advantage of CNMI Governor Babauta's presence in Washington, D.C. this week for a variety of business, Cohen demonstrated that the Federal Government would continue to work cooperatively with the CNMI to strengthen and diversify the economy. Cohen hailed his working relationship with the Governor.

"With the strong support of Governor Babauta, the Office of Insular Affairs hopes to strengthen the financial management capabilities and the economy of the CNMI. This can only be accomplished as a team effort with the Governor, the Department, and the people of the CNMI. The \$587,030 in Financial Management Improvement Plan funds awarded today will go a long way toward enhancing the accountability, efficiency and operation of several programs. In addition, we released \$243,000 to the CNMI for the Workforce Management Improvement Plan, which will be fully implemented upon a needs-based showing. These funds will directly assist in the re-structuring of the workforce with the aim toward full employment for the citizens of the CNMI."

Governor Babauta was instrumental in increasing federal funding for these activities. The CNMI's Financial Management Improvement Plan and Workforce Management Improvement Plan will yield benefits to all the citizens of the CNMI by stimulating the local economy. These programs represent the best type of cooperative efforts to share resources and expertise. Through the training and education provided by the CNMI's Financial Management Improvement Plan, the CNMI's own citizenry will increase their abilities to apply for, account for and utilize federal funds.

Governor Babauta thanked the Deputy Assistant Secretary. **"These funds are the result of a determined effort by the leadership of the CNMI, by the Resident Representative Pete A. Tenorio and by the Office of Insular Affairs to address longstanding financial management issues which will improve the state of our island's economy. We hope that the progress made in increasing this funding will manifest itself in the increased reliability of our islands' financial management systems. Finally, we are very pleased that new funds for the Workforce Management Improvement Plan, were made available by OIA to assist our people and improve our local economy."**

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