

**STATEMENT OF HON. GREGORIO KILILI SABLAN, A DELEGATE IN CONGRESS
FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS**

Good morning Chairman Spratt, Ranking Member Ryan, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the House Committee on the Budget on the Administration's budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2010 and the budget priorities of the Northern Mariana Islands on this Member's Day.

This is the first time in history that the people of the Northern Marianas – a United States Commonwealth since 1978 – have had a representative in Congress to speak on their behalf before this Committee. For this I am grateful, humbled, and privileged.

At the same time I feel the terrible responsibility of being the lone voice in Congress to try to raise awareness of the gulf between my constituents and the rest of our Nation. I am not speaking of the vast Pacific Ocean that separates us. I am speaking of the great gulf in standard of living. For so much of what Americans here on the continent take for granted in their every day lives is not available to my constituents – Americans, too – 8,000 miles away in the Marianas.

I want to discuss two of those deficits today: drinking water and wastewater.

Such a simple thing as turning on the kitchen tap and having water flow out – any time of day or night – water that you can put in a glass and drink down without a second thought – this is an experience that the people I represent mostly do not have.

There are workarounds. At my house and the homes of many of my neighbors we have water storage tanks. So, for the few hours each day the municipal water pipes run with water, we can collect enough to wash our clothes and bathe. It's as if every household and every business is its own little utility.

But this system doesn't provide potable water. The water that is stored in the tanks is unfit for human consumption. It's brackish, because aquifers are pumped beyond capacity. Or it's laden with bacteria that seep through cracked mains, because the municipal system is not fully pressurized and because chlorination facilities are lacking. So, instead, virtually every household has to buy water from private vendors for cooking and drinking.

Indeed, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, Mr. Chairman, the island of Saipan in the Marianas, with a population of some 50,000, is the only municipality of its size in our Nation without 24-hour, potable, municipal water.

On the wastewater side of the equation we are equally lacking. Let me give one example: On the island of Saipan is a homestead development of about 700 homes. Because there is no sewer system in that part of the island, each of those homes collects its wastewater in a private septic tank, which slowly leach into the land. The problem is that these 700 septic tanks sit over one of the best aquifers on our little island, furthering endangering the limited water supply and putting human health at risk.

The Northern Mariana Islands are not alone in our water woes. Our sister U.S. territories in the Pacific are, likewise, in need. The Environmental Protection Agency has reckoned that there are \$151,000,000 worth of water and sewer projects that need to be built – and are ready to be built – in these U.S. islands. In the Marianas these projects include distribution lines, large-scale reservoirs, and treatment plants estimated to cost \$65,800,000.

Now \$65,800,000 may not seem such an insurmountable amount to a Committee with responsibility for a outlays of \$3 trillion. But for a community of some 80,000 souls, for a territorial government with revenues of \$150,000,000 (and declining), an investment of \$65,800,000 is beyond our reach. Even more so because – and here is another gulf that separates

us from much of the rest of America – our incomes are so low. The median household income in the Marianas is 45% below the U.S. average.

We, together with the other U.S. territories, had hoped that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act might be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to address our need for water and sewer and other infrastructure crucial to maintaining a basic standard of human welfare. We had proposed that all of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund and all of the money that would be available to us for broadband deployment be bundled together into an infrastructure fund to be disbursed and managed by the Department of the Interior and focused on our basic needs. We were not successful.

We, together with the other U.S. territories, likewise tried to change the percentage of funds available to us through EPA State and Territorial Assistance Grants. Currently, the four “outlying areas,” as we are called, receive a maximum of .25% of any single appropriation to the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and a maximum of .33% of any single appropriation to the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. But these set-asides leaves us with less funding per-capita than any other U.S. jurisdiction. We tried raising these percentages in ARRA to squeeze out more money for our water and sewer needs. But we were not successful.

So, now, today, I come before you to ask your consideration of this fundamental problem: Americans who do not have municipal water systems that provide water around the clock fit for human consumption.

My solution is this: accept the list of water and sewer projects that the Environmental Protection Agency has compiled – and which I include with my testimony. Accept the price tag EPA has placed on this list. And provide budgetary authority sufficient to permit the Department of Interior to meet this need.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning. I think we all understand that our Nation stands at a crossroads. We can continue as we always have and hope for the best. Or we can strike out boldly in a new direction and do our best to ensure every American a basic standard of living. Thank you.

**US PACIFIC ISLANDS PRIORITY WATER & WASTEWATER PROJECTS
-- IMPLEMENTABLE IN 2009 IF FUNDING WERE AVAILABLE --**

AMERICAN SAMOA:

WASTEWATER:

Project: Aua Wastewater System

Description: Construction of force main, SPS, WWTF improvements, service laterals.

Purpose: To eliminate the discharge of raw sewage to the coastal shoreline and coral reef; eliminate household pit privies that contaminate groundwater and streams.

Cost: \$17 million

Project: Aunu'u Wastewater System

Description: Construction of sewage collection system, SPS, and constructed wetland treatment system

Purpose: To eliminate the discharge of raw sewage to the coastal shoreline and coral reef; eliminate household pit privies that contaminate groundwater.

Cost: \$7 million

Project: Tualauta Wastewater Collection System

Description: Construction of interceptors and service laterals

Purpose: To eliminate on-site systems (pit privies) that are contaminating groundwater and streams and causing public health problems.

Cost: \$2 million

Project: Installation of On-Site Systems for Villages that cannot be connected to Wastewater Collection and Treatment System

Description: Installation of 1,000 on-site septic tank (EPA approved) systems in villages.

Purpose: Eliminated inadequate on-site disposal systems that contaminate groundwater and streams.

Cost: \$1 million

TOTAL \$27,000,000

WATER

Project: Fagali'i-Malota-Fagamalu Water Supply System

Description: Construction of transmission and distribution lines, storage tank, booster station for water supply to three villages that do not have safe drinking water

Purpose: Compliance with EPA R9 Administrative Orders to provide safe drinking water; elimination of serious public health concern from drinking untreated water.

Total Cost: \$2 million

Project: LBJ Hospital -Faga'alu Water System Improvement

Description: Construction of water storage tank and transmission lines.

Purpose: LBJ Hospital experiences serious low pressure during time of high demand and threatens safe drinking water supply.

Cost: \$800,000

Project: Replacement of Tramway (Water Storage) Tank

Description: Construction of two (2) water storage tanks with SCADA and security fence; transmission lines and appurtenances, access road.

Purpose: Existing welded steel tank in advanced state of deterioration (constructed in 1970). Tank important to operation of central system
Cost: \$1,300,000

Project: Afono Well/Tank to Aua Tank

Description: Construction of new well and booster station.

Purpose: Provide service to existing customers that do not receive a reliable (daily) source of safe drinking water

Cost: \$600,000

TOTAL \$4,700,000

AMERICAN SAMOA TOTAL \$31,700,000

GUAM:

WASTEWATER:

Project: Central Guam Wastewater Collection System Improvements

Description: Address aged sewer collection and pump station capacity issues for the central area of Guam.

Importance: Prevent sewer system overflows to public areas and marine environment.

Cost: - New Chaot Pressure Pipeline:

\$3,400,000

- Pump Station Upgrades (Agana, Chaot, Mamajanao) and Forcemain extension:

\$600,000

- Tumon Improvements (Fujita Pump Station and New Forcemain):

\$3,500,000

- New Tamuning area Collection, Forcemain and Pump Station Improvements:

\$20,000,000 (est)

Project: Old Agat Sewer Collector Line Replacement

Description: Replacement of aged, deteriorated sewer collector lines to prevent sewer system overflows and address hydraulic capacity issues.

Importance: Prevent sewer system overflow to public areas and marine environment.

Cost: Project Cost:

\$4,500,000

Project: Agat Route 2 Sewer Line Replacement

Description: Replacement of the old Route 2 sewer line to prevent sewer system overflows and address hydraulic capacity issues.

Importance: Prevent sewer system overflow to public areas and marine environment.

Cost:

\$500,000

Project: Leyang Sewer Collection Line Installation

Description: New sewer line in Leyang area to connect unsewered residential housing currently on septic systems.

Importance: Source water protection of sole source aquifer.

Cost:

\$400,000

TOTAL:
\$32,900,000

WATER:

Project: Water System Reservoir Replacements

Description: Replace aged, structurally unsound, deteriorated water system reservoirs in the central area of Guam.

Importance: Public safety and health.

Cost: - Replacement of three reservoirs
\$10,000,000

Project: Water Distribution System Line Replacement

Description: Replace undersized water distribution system lines to address inadequate water flow and pressure areas of the system.

Importance: Public health

Cost: \$5,000,000

Project: Water Booster Pump Station Improvements

Description: Provide adequate pumping capacity and water supply to areas in the southern portion of Guam.

Importance: Public health

Cost: \$1,200,000

Project: Installation of new Water Wells

Description: Provide water supply for construction phase workers supporting Guam military buildup

Importance: Public health

Cost: - Installation of water wells
\$5,000,000

TOTAL:
\$21,200,000

GUAM TOTAL \$54,100,000

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS (CNMI)

WASTEWATER:

Project: Upgrade/Rehabilitation of the Agingan and Sadog Tasi WWTPs

Description: Upgrade and rehabilitation of deteriorated main process components and equipment

Importance: Rehabilitation is necessary to prevent discharge of partially treated sewage, protection of public health and marine environment.

Cost: \$1,500,000

Project: Upgraded of Sewer Lift Stations and Rerouting of Collection Lines

Description: Renovation of lift stations (A-7, S-1 and S-9) and reroute gravity sewer collection

Importance: line to address flow constrictions and decommissioning of two lift stations. Increase pump station and sewer collection system reliability to mitigate sewer system overflows during peak flow periods. Project would protect public health and marine environment.

Cost: \$800,000

Project: Upgrade of Sewer Lift Stations

Description: Renovate and upgrade CUC's main lift stations S-3, A-16 and A-1 to address operational and reliability problems.

Importance: Prevent sewer system overflows and protect public health and marine environment.

Cost: \$500,000

Project: Kagman Wasterwater Treatment Plant (Saipan)

Description: New wastewater collection system and treatment plant for unsewered Kagman homestead area.

Importance: Prevention contamination of groundwater source

Cost: \$15,000,000(est)

Project: Tinian Wastewater Treatment Plant (Tinian)

Description: New wastewater collection system and treatment plant to eliminate aged residential septic systems

Importance: Prevention contamination of groundwater source

Cost: \$15,000,000(est)

TOTAL:
\$32,800,000

WATER:

Project: Saipan Water System Reservoir Replacements/Improvements

Description: Replace aged, structurally unsound, deteriorated water system reservoirs on Saipan.

Importance: Public safety and health and provide 24 hour water.

Cost: - Replacement of two reservoirs
\$5,000,000

Project: Saipan Water Distribution System Line Replacement

Description: Replace undersized water distribution system lines to address inadequate water flow, supply and pressure in the system.

Importance: Public health and provide 24 hour water.

Cost: \$5,000,000

Project: Saipan Water Wells Rehabilitation/Improvements

Description: Improve water well sites to ensure proper disinfection/chlorination of water supply.

Importance: Public health and water quality

Cost: \$1,000,000

Project: Tapochao Waterline (Saipan)

Description: Connect waterline to Tapochao water well.
Importance: Public health, water quality and quantity.
Cost: \$1,000,000

Project: New Water Wells at Sablan, San Vicente and Gualo Rai (Saipan)

Description: Establish new wellfield for improved water supply
Importance: Public health, 24 hour water.
Cost: \$5,000,000

Project: New Water Reservoir and Waterline (Saipan)

Description: Connect new wellfield and water supply reservoir
Importance: 24 hour water.
Cost: \$5,000,000

Project: Saipan Water Distribution System Improvement

Description: Connect Northern and Southern water systems to improve distribution
Importance: 24 hour water
Cost: \$5,000,000

Project: Rota Water Reservoir Rehabilitation

Description: Rehabilitation of aged, deteriorated water system reservoirs (2) on Rota.
Importance: Public health
Cost: \$1,000,000

Project: Rota Water Treatment System

Description: New water filtration treatment plant to address untreated surface water source
Importance: Public health
Cost: \$8,000,000

Project: Tinian Reservoir

Description: New water system reservoir to provide adequate system pressure and supply
Importance: Public health
Cost: \$2,000,000

TOTAL:
\$33,000,000

CNMI TOTAL \$65,800,000

US PACIFIC ISLANDS TOTAL \$151,000,000