



Office of the Attorney General of Guam

590 S. Marine Corps Dr., Ste. 901, Tamuning, Guam 96913



AG on the Plebiscite Case and the DOJ's Letter to Chamorro Land Trust

March 21, 2017- Tamuning, Guam- The Governor invited certain members of the Guam Legislature and the Attorney General to meet yesterday to discuss further action on the Plebiscite Case, and Guam's response to the Department of Justice's January letter to the Governor concerning the Chamorro Land Trust.

"It was a very good meeting. I advised our lawmakers that we are still conducting our review and analysis, and that a decision on an appeal will be made before the April 7th deadline," said General Barrett-Anderson.

"This is the second voting rights case in our region to be struck down by the federal court, and I understand the CNMI might also be contemplating an appeal of their case. Any fight through our federal court system is extremely challenging when Constitutional rights are in question, especially when the fight involves the right to vote. And while the residents of a territory do not share in many Constitutional votes as are afforded residents of states, federal courts are quick to strike down laws that do not give equal voting rights to all," she continued.

The plebiscite vote under Guam law gives those persons born on Guam between April 11, 1899 and August 1, 1950, and their children, a vote to self-determination. It makes no change in law, and does not confer any benefit to anyone. It is the political expression by a Congressionally defined category of people...the majority of whom are native island Chamorros.

Regarding the US Department of Justice's concerns with the Chamorro Land Trust, General Barrett-Anderson stated, "I made it clear to the Governor and Senators that I will not be signing a Consent Decree. I have come back to the position of Attorney General after 25 years to find that a 1991 Consent Decree is still pending against the Department of Corrections, and the government of Guam is under two additional judgments by the federal court that is costing our taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. We are trying to close these cases, not open new ones. Unfortunately, I expect to be in court shortly regarding the issues being raised by the federal government concerning the Chamorro Land Trust."

"Both the Plebiscite Case and the attack upon the Chamorro Land Trust are resurrecting new political status debate. This is good because the debate has been too quiet for too long. It's time to return to the doorsteps of Congress as our lawmakers did in 1950. Congress must exercise its constitutional power over this territory once again for the preservation of Chamorro traditions, values, and culture through their land, and to accord the "inhabitants" of Guam as they defined it in the vote of self-determination," she finished.

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For more information:

Carlina Charfauros
ccharfauros@guamag.org
475-3324 ext. 5020