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## PRESS RELEASE

(Hagåtña, Guam) – Yesterday, June 24, 2026, the Supreme Court of Guam and the Supreme Court of the Northern Mariana Islands signed reciprocity agreements, allowing lawyers licensed to practice law in Guam or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to practice in either jurisdiction without having to sit for an additional bar exam.

Each high court has adopted its own version of the agreement, along with companion rules and regulations governing how attorneys in good standing in one jurisdiction can be admitted to practice in the other. Guam Chief Justice Katherine A. Maraman and Associate Justices F. Philip Carbullido and Robert J. Torres, Jr., together with NMI Supreme Court Associate Justice John A. Manglona and judicial officers and bar representatives from both jurisdictions, attended the joint signing ceremony at The Westin Resort Guam. Representatives from the Northern Mariana Islands included Superior Court Judges Lillian A. Tenorio and Joey P. San Nicolas, Clerk of the Supreme Court Judy T. Aldan, and Judiciary General Counsel Hyun Jae Lee. NMI Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro and Associate Justice Roberto C. Naraja joined the ceremony remotely. Attendees roundly called it a meaningful step toward improving access to legal representation across the Marianas.

“The dwindling number of lawyers in Guam—and the higher fees that naturally result when demand is high and supply is thin—has made it difficult, if not impossible, for many in our community to obtain the services of a lawyer,” said Chief Justice Katherine A. Maraman. “We hope to see the benefits of these changes in the very near future—where there are enough lawyers to meet the legal needs of our community, at fees that the average citizen can afford. This is yet another step toward increasing access to justice.”

“Today, we seize the opportunity to strengthen the bonds between our islands and make legal services more readily available to the people,” added NMI Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro.

Bar association leaders from the two jurisdictions lauded this effort. CNMI Bar Association President Gretchen Smith, stated: “The NMI and Guam are facing an overwhelming shortage of attorneys. Reciprocity will hopefully alleviate some of that pressure.” In 2025, the bar association voted and passed a resolution in support of the reciprocal arrangement.

“Widening of the pool of attorneys able to practice in either jurisdiction is a step forward in a broader, ongoing effort to make legal representation accessible to everyone in the community,” said John Morrison, Vice President of the Guam Bar Association.

The agreement comes as both Guam and the NMI grapple with a shrinking bar roster; as the number of practicing attorneys has fallen, residents have faced fewer choices for legal representation at an affordable cost. The CNMI and Guam administer the same bar examination, NextGen Uniform Bar Examination (UBE), under the auspices of the National Conference of Bar Examiners.

For more information, please contact:

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