



COMMISSION ON DECOLONIZATION
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
September 2, 2025 | 3:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order: 3:04 p.m.

II. Roll Call

1. Hon. Lourdes Leon Guerrero
2. Hon. Frank Blas Jr. (Excused)
3. Hon. Sabrina Salas Matanane
4. Hon. Pedro Suzuki Blas
5. Hon. Eddie Duenas (Absent)
6. Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper
7. Dr. Michael Bevacqua
8. Victoria “Lola” Leon Guerrero
9. Dr. Mary Cruz
10. Natasha Suba
11. Anthony Charfauros (Excused)
12. Other

- a. Andrew Leon Guerrero - Office of Speaker Frank Blas Jr.
- b. Jonah Benavente - Guam Daily Post

Before Governor Lourdes Leon Guerrero was able to attend the meeting, Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper served as Chairperson for the meeting.

- a. Motion made by Dr. Mary Cruz to have Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper serve as chair for the meeting.
- b. Seconded by Natasha Suba.
- c. Motion approved by consensus.

III. Approval of Minutes - Regular Monthly Board Meeting - June 3, 2025

- a. Motion made by Dr. Mary Cruz to approve minutes.
- b. Seconded by Senator Sabrina Matanane.
- c. Motion approved by consensus.

IV. Financial Report

- a. Account balances
 - i. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported account balances of the political status task forces for the non-encumbered funds as of August 5, 2025. The Statehood Task Force has a balance of

\$55,000; with \$32,000 in contractual services, \$15,000 in supplies, and \$8,000 in equipment. The Free Association Task Force has a balance of \$42,351; with \$21,250 in contractual services, \$15,000 in supplies, and \$6,101 in equipment. The Independence Task Force has a balance of \$5,660; they have zeroed out their funding for contractual services and have \$5,660 in supplies with a modification for pending purchase. After the modification, the remaining funding for supplies will be \$4,910. The Independence Task Force has zeroed out their funding in equipment.

- b. Task force procurement updates
 - i. Independence Task Force Procurement Requests
 - 1. Graphic Designer/Video Production
 - a. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that in June, the Independence Task Force's purchase orders for graphic design and video production services were encumbered and shared with the appropriate vendors.
 - ii. Free Association Task Force Procurement Requests
 - 1. Social Media Management/Rebranding
 - a. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that in June, the Free Association Task Force requested purchase orders for branding and social media management, which were encumbered and shared with the appropriate vendors.
 - 2. **Melvin Won Pat Borja:** Noted that the COD team has been in communication with the Task Force to discuss services and goods for procurement.
 - iii. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Asked that if there are any other pending issues regarding procurement for the two task forces, to please contact COD as soon as possible.
- c. Procurement deadlines
 - i. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that on August 8, 2025, the Department of Administration (DOA) transmitted Circular 2025-40, which outlined the procurement deadlines for Fiscal Year 2025 (FY 2025). All purchase orders must be encumbered by September 30, 2025. All invoices for FY 2025 purchase orders must be submitted by October 15, 2025 to ensure timely processing of invoices. The COD team asks for the task forces to adhere to the following internal deadlines. For purchase orders and blanket purchase agreement requests the deadline is Monday, September 8, 2025. This will allow time for the Request for Quote (RFQ) process. For invoices, the deadline is Saturday, October 6, 2025 to allow COD time to prepare for invoice submission.
 - ii. **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper:** Requested for schedule of internal deadlines to be sent by email to the task forces.
 - iii. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Confirmed that the schedule of internal deadlines will be sent to all of the task forces for their awareness.

V. Old Business

a. Plebiscite Update & Strategy Discussion

1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that on June 20, 2025, COD received a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for records of correspondence and expenditures related to a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) or third party involvement in a political status plebiscite. The responsive documents were submitted to the requester on June 25, 2025. Notably, there were no expenditures related to an NGO or third party involvement in a political status plebiscite. The FOIA request may have resulted from the ongoing discussions on how to proceed with a referendum since the ruling on voter eligibility in *Davis v. Guam* (2019). Explained that the only way for the Government of Guam to proceed in facilitating a referendum is for the Guam Legislature to repeal the current law and replace it with a law that has no restrictions on voting eligibility. The legal opinion issued by Attorney General Douglas Moylan (2024) stated that public funds cannot be used to facilitate a referendum in which there is limited eligibility. Nothing would prevent an NGO from taking on the task. Noted that if this were the path to proceed, no government resources could support an NGO-led referendum.
2. **Senator Sabrina Salas Matanane:** Asked if it can be disclosed in regards to who sent the FOIA.
3. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Noted that the requestor was Logan Churchwell from the Public Interest Legal Foundation.
4. **Senator Sabrina Salas Matanane:** Asked if COD has pursued hiring an NGO.
5. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that hiring an NGO would not be allowed.
6. **Senator Sabrina Salas Matanane:** Asked if the Guam Legislature can hire an NGO.
7. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that the Guam Legislature would not be allowed to hire an NGO. Noted that the Guam Legislature could address the issue at a policy level, which would entail a repeal of the existing law and its replacement with a law that would adhere to the confines of the Ninth Circuit Court ruling.

b. COD Decolonization Exhibit

1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that in August, Ha'ani San Nicolas joined COD as a Fellow and Research Assistant as part of the Center for Island Sustainability (CIS) Navigating Home Fellowship. Explained that the fellowship provides employment opportunities in Government of Guam agencies to returning Guam residents who obtain post-secondary degrees. Ha'ani has a background in indigenous politics and has a personal interest in Guam's decolonization. She requested to serve as a fellow under COD. Ha'ani has been oriented with COD and has taken lead on the upcoming Decolonization exhibit and has started this project.
2. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that COD was not able to process purchase orders and expend funds for an exhibit coordinator and a graphic designer by the end of FY 2025 because the services could not carry on to FY 2026. Explained that the services will be picked up at the

opening of FY 2026. Noted that COD has procured research consultation services from Dr. Tabitha Espina, who is helping to conduct initial archival research and narrative development. Additionally, COD is partnering with Guam Museum and is collaborating with the museum curator, Dr. Michael Bevacqua.

3. **Victoria Lola Leon Guerrero:** Asked if the Decolonization exhibit can serve to reboot or contribute to the decolonization section of the permanent exhibit in the Guam Museum.
4. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Responded that COD will be meeting with Dr. Bevacqua on Friday, September 5. Reported that the Department of CHamoru Affairs (DCA) has managed to execute a return agreement with the Bishop Museum for the return of items from the Hornbostel Collection. The Guam Museum team is strategizing ways to integrate some of the Hornbostel items into the permanent exhibit. COD will work directly with the Guam Museum on ways to revamp the decolonization content within the permanent exhibit.
5. **Governor Leon Guerrero entered the meeting and served as Chair for the remainder of the meeting.**
6. **Dr. Michael Bevacqua:** Added that the museum is hoping to update the *I Hinanao-ta* exhibit starting next month. The museum team will begin drafting proposals for updating sections of the exhibit. Notes that the decolonization section of the exhibit ends with the *Davis v. Guam* case and focuses on political development and general themes. When the decolonization exhibit begins, some of the information can be integrated into the permanent exhibit. The arrival of items from the Hornbostel Collection and the upcoming Decolonization exhibit, will help to offer ideas for how sections of the permanent exhibit can be revamped.

V. New Business

a. Micronesian Islands Forum Resolution

1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that from June 30 - July 4, 2025, the Government of Guam participated in the annual Micronesian Islands Forum (MIF). During which the MIF leadership signed Resolution 27-06: "Supporting and endorsing initiatives to achieve Self-determination and decolonization for the unincorporated territory of Guam." The MIF leadership reaffirmed the rights of Self-determination and decolonization and committed to actively pursue opportunities to elevate and amplify regional and international discourse on Self-determination and decolonization for Guam. The MIF Secretariat will disseminate the resolution with regional and international partners, including the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). Noted that PIF will be conducting their Leaders Meeting from September 8 - 12, 2025. Expressed thanks to Governor Leon Guerrero and her policy office in crafting the MIF resolution. Notably, a number of the MIF members are members of the United Nations (UN). Expressed excitement about the resolution's potential to move into PIF as a vast majority of PIF members are also United Nations members. Reported that Lt. Governor Tenorio attended the PIF Foreign Ministers Meeting, where he reported the passage

of the MIF resolution. Notably, Governor Leon Guerrero has committed to carry the MIF resolution to PIF during the Leaders Meeting. The implications of the MIF resolution are significant as it puts on the record the support of various nations who are also United Nations members in their support for a full measure of Self-government, Self-determination and decolonization for Guam. The Office of the Governor is working with COD to develop language for the 54th PIF Leaders Meeting and final communique, which will recognize Guam's Self-determination and decolonization efforts and commit Pacific leaders to support Guam's efforts.

b. Task Force Participation

1. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that this item of discussion was added as a result of the 2025 Fanhita conference. Expressed concern after the Task Force Panel was canceled due to the inability to have all task forces present. Noted that task forces are often not equally represented in COD facilitated community outreach and engagements and is an ongoing issue that must be resolved. Explained that the challenge is that all of our task force members are volunteers. Task force funding can only be used to support educational campaigns and cannot be used to hire personnel. Expressed thanks for the reinvigorated effort and leadership by the Free Association Task Force, led by their chair Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper. Noted that Former Senator Eddie Duenas and Mr. Eloy Hara are still interested in conducting the work of the Statehood Task Force. However, they could use additional support to help carry out their mission. Asked for the Board's help in identifying potential volunteers for the Statehood Task Force.
2. **Governor Leon Guerrero:** Suggested that COD reach out to the University of Guam (UOG) Political Science Student Association (PSSA) and/ or their Political Science classes to garner interest and potential volunteers. The mayors may also have some recommendations.
3. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that COD recently met with the new mayoral representative, Vice Mayor Blas. Discussions during the meeting revolved around strategic engagement with the mayors and engagement at the village level. COD is working on village-level outreach/ community engagement. Explained that COD has been focusing its efforts on high schools, the Guam Community College, and UOG. With COD's small team, it is the most efficient way to conduct outreach and has had a significant impact in terms of its ability to distribute information and educational resources.
4. **Governor Leon Guerrero:** Suggested that the Board have the Mayor's Council invite COD to appear at their council meeting.
5. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Noted that COD has appeared before the Mayor's Council and was able to get more support from the mayors.
6. **Vice Mayor Blas:** Added that this has been discussed with the Mayor's Council President, Mayor Jesse Aliig. Noted that it would be good to have another refresher from COD and to have

- presentations from the task forces at the Yigo Senior Center. This would help to show the community what they have to offer and to hopefully garner volunteers.
7. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Confirmed that COD will be in touch to coordinate with Vice Mayor Blas and Mayor Alig.
 8. **Victoria Lola Leon Guerrero:** Reiterated that recruitment for the Task Forces is essential. Noted that the Independence Task Force is almost always the group that is impacted from the policy that if not all task forces are present, no task forces can present. Suggested that a new policy could be made where COD extends invitations to all task forces but allows presentations to proceed from the responsive task forces.
 9. **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper:** Explained that absences of the Free Association Task Force were before his chairmanship.
 10. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Acknowledged that COD has often been accused of being advocates for one particular status. COD has to constantly remind people that it is not built to advocate for any one particular status and its focus is to help raise awareness about the inequities of Guam's current status and about the benefits of political status resolution through any of the three options. In future COD-led events, it will work with the task forces that are available and will drive traffic to resources if any of the task forces are not present.
 11. **Senator Sabrina Salas Matanane:** Asked for the current chair of the Statehood Task Force.
 12. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Responded that Former Senator Eddie Duenas is the current chair of the Statehood Task Force. Explained that COD has not been able to identify an individual willing to take over the task force. Explained the process for acknowledging a volunteer group as a task force. If the board is dissatisfied with a task force and members would like to take over, it is the prerogative of the Board to recognize the newly formed group.

VI. COD Office Updates

- a. COD - UOG CIS/ SG Fellowship w/Ha'ani San Nicolas
 - i. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that Ha'ani San Nicolas began her one-year fellowship with COD on August 28, 2025. COD is excited to work with her. Notably, her fellowship term ends in August 2026.
- b. COD outreach
 - i. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported recent progress of COD's Public Information Program (PIP). COD has continued to host the *Challenge the Status Quo* radio program every Monday from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. on WAVE 105.1 FM. Invited board members to be guests on the program or to suggest show topics. Thanked the COD team for their work on the program. On June 27, 2025, COD participated in facilitation of political status debates with UOG students during their Critical Thinking summer course. COD also participated in UOG's Fall 2025 Welcome Back event from August 20 - 21, 2025, during the event COD distributed

educational resources and the reprint of the COD x LongLive t-shirt. On July 4 and July 21, 2025, COD hosted outreach tables at Independence Guåhan's annual *Na'la'la* Concert and the 81st Liberation Day *Dinanña'* CHamoru Festival. COD utilized both engagements to distribute educational material as well as COD's collaborative apparel. COD also conducted an Instagram trivia contest to drive engagement, which had a great turnout. COD has also distributed educational material to the Micronesia Climate Change Alliance (MCCA) for their outreach engagements with both the local and diaspora communities. Finally, on August 1, 2025, COD conducted outreach during the 75th Organic Act Anniversary - Critical Conversations panel at the Guam Congress Building. COD helped to prepare the panel questions and used the opportunity to provide educational resources to attendees.

- ii. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that COD will be distributing educational materials to nine high schools on September 3, 2025. On August 29, 2025, Senator Parkinson informed COD of his upcoming town hall meeting to discuss *Resolution No. 29-38* and invited COD and the political status task forces to participate. The town hall will be held on September 10, 2025 from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. at the Yigo Senior Center. COD met with Senator Parkinson after the press conference regarding his resolution and discussed COD's efforts and offered its support to provide information should he proceed with his own outreach. COD is aiming to hold at least one village outreach before the end of the fiscal year. It will be a test run to gauge interest on the village level.

VII. Task Force Updates

- a. Statehood
 1. No updates.
- b. Independence
 1. **Victoria Lola Leon Guerrero:** Reported that the Independence Task Force hosted the *Na'la'la* concert on July 4, 2025 at The Lime Venue. Expressed thanks to COD for tabling at the event. Noted that the event had a lot of great community organizations and vendors, with wonderful bands throughout the day. Almost 300 people attended the event, the Task Force gave away most of its t-shirts and educational materials. The Task Force is planning to have a teach-in at Angel Santos Memorial Park on Saturday, September, 21 at 3:00 p.m. The theme will be "From Hurao to Fanoghe: 350 Years of CHamoru Resistance to Colonization."
- c. Free Association
 1. **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper:** Reported that the Free Association Task Force had initial meetings with vendors for the Task Force's rebranding and social media campaign. Work continues with the vendor on the substance of designs and updating more information to make it social media friendly. In FY26, the Task Force will pivot to smaller chunks of research as opposed to the initial ask for research consultation. The Task Force continues to grow its archive of information on the

Compacts of Free Association and related documents to Free Association within their Google Drive.

VIII. Open Floor

- a. **Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper:** Asked about the remaining international avenues that Guam can pursue to address decolonization.
- b. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Guam has been utilizing available avenues, primarily through MIF and PIF, and has been relatively active at both forums. Guam was able to elevate to Associate membership in which has created greater access. Recently, MIF approved a resolution supporting Guam's efforts towards Self-determination and decolonization, which should carry onto PIF. Engagement at the United Nations is done regularly. Guam has yet to engage the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), where Guam is an associate member. Noted that the British Virgin Islands has been able to effectively leverage their membership in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to advance their cause with the United Nations. COD will work with the Governor's policy team to identify an agency that may engage with ESCAP. Also noted that Guam's case with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights is still pending. Guam is still working with the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO). Commented that it is underutilized, as Guam needs to find a way to engage at the United Nations in Geneva. Explained that the UNPO has not been able to stand up their office in Washington D.C. Invited the board to provide suggestions for more opportunities to pursue international engagement.
- c. **Governor Leon Guerrero:** Reflected on her experience and asserted that at the international level, Guam's quest is totally supported. Asked what can be done on a national level to persuade the United States to assist Guam move forward towards its Self-determination. Suggested bringing up the issue to the Department of Interior, the State Department, and even Congress through working with Guam's congressional delegate to initiate discussions.
- d. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Noted that Guam's Congressional delegate has introduced the idea of creating an information gathering task force with the end goal of achieving non-voting representation in the Senate. Guam has had a very long and consistent history on the issue of Self-determination within Congress and outside of it.
- e. **Governor Leon Guerrero:** Proposed for the Guam Legislature to pass a resolution to regenerate interest on the issue nationally.
- f. **Senator Sabrina Salas Matanane:** Expressed interest in working with COD in drafting a resolution. Asked if Guam's Congressional delegate has even been a board member of the Commission.
- g. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Explained that by law, the Congressional delegate is not a member of the Commission. Board membership is composed of the Governor who serves as Chair, three members of the Guam Legislature, a representative of the Mayor's Council, a representative of the Guam Youth Congress, the chairs of the task forces, and the two members-at-large appointed by the Governor.

- h. **Melvin Won Pat-Borja:** Reported that the United Nations' 4th Committee (C-4) 80th Session is taking place from October 7 - 13, 2025. Applications for petitions close on September 13. Invited those interested to petition. COD can assist in the process of petitioning and the identification of a local organization which petitioners can represent.

IX. Adjournment

- a. Motion to adjourn made by Governor Leon Guerrero.
- b. Seconded by Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper.
- c. Motion approved by consensus.
- d. Adjourned at 4:15 p.m.