



OFFICE OF SENATOR SABINA FLORES PEREZ
Chairperson
Committee on Environment, Revenue and Taxation, and Procurement
I MINA'TRENTAI SINGKO NA LIHESLATURAN GUÁHAN
35TH GUAM LEGISLATURE

PRESS RELEASE

Landmark Environmental Law is Weakened

Guam, August 28, 2020 — Senator Perez issues the following statement regarding amended Bill 282-35 (Chapter 2, Part 3, Section 12), regarding today's actions on the Recycling Revolving Fund.

“Today, the Guam Legislature voted to raid \$500,000 from the Recycling Revolving Fund (RRF).

Every year, the people of Guam pay an annual vehicle registration fee, and those funds go into a special lockbox called the Recycling Revolving Fund. The law is clear on how these funds must be used: Guam EPA administers the fund to assist Mayors to remove abandoned vehicles and tires, clean up illegal dump sites, and subsidize recycling efforts on Guam.

This is the law, and no legislature has ever violated it.

I am deeply saddened that the RRF is now being raided in direct violation of the law. Without a public hearing, \$500,000 is being removed from the RRF and given to UOG without a formal budget submission and without board oversight and accountability.

I thank my colleagues for supporting my amendment to save the RRF: Vice Speaker Telena Cruz Nelson, Senator Kelly Marsh Taitano, Senator Therese Terlaje, Senator Telo Taitague, Senator Louise Muna, and Senator James Moylan. I also thank those village Mayors and Vice Mayors who wrote to oppose the raiding of the RRF, and who warned of the dangerous precedent being set. Unfortunately, our effort to protect this landmark environmental fund lost by a 7-8 vote.

Throughout most of its 16 year's existence, the RRF was the point of contention without its rules and regulations. Many times, competing government agencies have sought to raid the fund for unrelated purposes. In October of last year, this very body unanimously approved Rules and Regulations further protecting the RRF, and we celebrated the depoliticization of this important environmental fund. Unfortunately, our people may now view the actions taken today as hypocritical.

By permitting the raid of \$500,000 of taxpayer funds, the RRF may now become a slush fund for future legislatures. Be it next year, or ten years from now, any future Legislature may point to the precedent set today to justify further raids. Guam EPA will suffer, the Mayors will suffer, and the people of Guam will continue to wonder why their government is unable to fund tire and vehicle removal, the cleaning of illegal dump sites, and recycling.

As a member of the G3, I understand the important work being done by the many environmental advocates in Guam, and I value the initiative's promotion of sustainability goals. But true environmental sustainability cannot be achieved by raiding one environmental cause to fund another, or by ignoring laws and legal precedents. It undermines the entire movement and creates false achievements.

While saddened by today's outcome, I am as committed as ever to relentlessly fight for environmental sustainability for our people and our island.”

#####