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Chairperson

Committee on Environment, Revenue and Taxation, Labor, Procurement,
and Statistics, Research, and Planning

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Sen. Perez Introduces Resolution Calling for Prevention of Contamination to Guam's Primary Water Source

GUAM, March 31, 2021 - Senator Sabina Flores Perez on Wednesday introduced a resolution calling for urgent support for the protection of the people of Guam's right to safe drinking water from lead and other sources of contamination, and urges for the restoration of the CHamoru people's relationship to water.

"Water is the source of life for the CHamoru people and everyone who calls Guam home," Senator Perez said. "We must be protectors of our water resources and do everything we can to ensure our future generations will inherit a healthy and sustainable island."

Res. 55-36 observes the theme of this year's World Water Day, "valuing water."

The Resolution recognizes the cultural significance of water to the Indigenous people of Guam, and the sacred relationship between the CHamoru people and the natural environment, which is threatened by irreparable harm that may result from the Department of Defense's development of the Live Fire Training Range Complex and related projects.

"The location of bases near or on top of water sources that supply most of the island population threatens the health of the current populace, both military and civilian," Senator Perez said. "Access to safe drinking water is a basic and fundamental human right recognized by the United Nations, and for the people of our non-self-governing territory, it is under serious threat."

Eighty percent of our island's drinking water is supplied by the Northern Guam Lens Aquifer. The military has stated it plans to fire 6.7 million rounds of ammunition each year, for an indefinite amount of time, posing a very serious threat of lead and other forms of contamination. Studies indicate children, infants, and fetuses are most susceptible to the effects of lead contamination. Even at low exposure levels, lead is extremely toxic to the body.

Cancer rates on Guam continue to remain one of the leading causes of death for the island community due to military activity in and around the Pacific. Recent studies similarly link firing ranges to contamination, calling into question the rationality of the military's continued pursuit of the buildup.

"These studies did not yet exist when the EIS was completed, and it is only right that they be fully applied to the actions and decisions that are being made," Senator Perez said. "The consequences of these actions will be long-term and irreversible, and it is our people who will be most at risk."

Res. 55-36 also calls on the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples, to undertake official visits in Guam relevant to their mandates.

"We are blessed with this land and our natural resources because of the efforts of our ancestors. As we continue to look for solutions to climate change we must reflect on what it means to live with inafa'maolek with one another, and with our natural environment," Senator Perez said. "I'm therefore calling on the local, national and international communities to address the systemic threats to our rights to safe drinking water."

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