

And now the even harder work begins

Written by BY SEN. BEN PANGELINAN
Thursday, 05 Jun 2014 03:00am

OVER the past several legislative terms, I have continued to willingly take on the responsibility of being the chairman of multiple committees of the Guam Legislature that has legislative oversight over numerous agencies within the government of Guam. The responsibilities of holding such chairmanships involve work that encompasses and requires knowledge, experience and understanding of the multi-faceted operations and policies of these government departments and agencies and to ensure that a balance is provided between the needs of these agencies and the achievement of their stated purposes of existence.

The Office of the People includes my chairmanship of the legislative committees on appropriations, public debt, legal affairs, retirement, public parks, recreation, historic preservation and land with oversight over government agencies such as the Bureau of Budget and Management Research, the Guam Economic Development Authority, the Office of the Attorney General, the Government of Guam Retirement Fund, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Land Management, the Guam Ancestral Lands Commission, and the Chamorro Land Trust Commission.

The legislative process is one that is inclusive and provides a medium from which the public at-large as well as any other government stakeholders within the government can provide their thoughts, positions, testimonies, etc. on matters before the legislative body. It is within this legislative process that the work of The Office of the People is apparent and thrives. When any one senator introduces bills and it is referred to my committee, the legislative process specific to the introduced bill begins.

Currently, there have been 343 bills introduced by multiple senators during the 32nd Guam Legislature –with six more months left in the term. Of the 343 bills introduced, 135 were referred to my committee, representing almost 40 percent of the total bills introduced.

Part of any committee work involves ensuring that committee reports for bills include the testimonies presented by the public and other government stakeholders. I have continued to ensure that accuracy, transparency and accountability are upheld in the drafting and submission of committee reports through the arduous, but necessary task of making verbatim transcriptions of all testimony presented during public hearings. With such assurances, this term alone, the Office of the People has filed committee reports totaling hundreds of thousands of words of testimonies for the 40 percent of the total bills introduced by senators of the Guam Legislature.

Then of course there is the work I must perform as chairman of the legislative committee on appropriations. As chairman, I, along with the committee, am responsible for overseeing the legislative task of crafting and formulating the fiscal year budget of the entire government of Guam with assistance from the Office of Finance and Budget. The hard work of balancing our resources with our expenditures is not a one-time annual event, but an arduous and yearlong process necessary to uphold checks and balances within our government.

Over the next several weeks, until the final passage of the annual budget, we will keep you updated on our progress that will lead to the final bill that will eventually receive the support of

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my colleagues and signature by the governor.

Looking back at all the work completed this legislative term, more specifically the work of my committee, it is easy to notice the progress we have made and how far we have come. As we look forward to the remainder of the term, I am confident that the work of the people will continue toward ensuring not only one class of people are represented, heard and prioritized, but all the people of Guam. In order to achieve this, we all must ensure we keep a close eye on not just what we read and see, but also on what is being done within our government that must be for the benefit of the people as a whole.

Si Yu'os Ma'ase.