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NO GREEN CARD, NO U.S. CITIZENSHIP FOR CNMI'S GUEST WORKERS

The Philippine Consulate in Saipan reported that US representative for the CNMI Gregorio "Kilili" Sablan, on 23 March 2011 has announced that the US Congress is not inclined to give long term CNMI guest workers an automatic "green card" or US citizenship. Congressman Sablan made the announcement during the meeting with NMI Women's Association and CNMI Economic Restoration Summit. He further stated that the atmosphere in the US congress with regard to anything involving immigration is not "very good".

Meanwhile, the US representative is preparing a legislation to cover the status of the following:

- a. Immediate Relatives (IRs, those married to local citizens),
- b. CNMI permanent residents (those conferred CNMI-only residency status from 1977 to 1981 by the CNMI government), and
- c. Individuals born in the CNMI between 1974 and 07 January 1978 (referring to the so-called "stateless children" born during the period before conferment of US citizenship on those born of alien parents in CNMI territory).

The proposed legislation would grant above-mentioned individuals, resident status for CNMI-only, but require them to apply for B1 or B2 visas in order to travel to the mainland or other US territories.

Congressman Sablan's statement confirms a bleak future as far as the status of our Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in CNMI is concerned. The Philippine Consulate foresees the critical problems that may arise after the 28 November 2011 when the guest workers "umbrella permits" expires which may result to the loss of immigration status of our OFWs.

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Administrator
