

Official Ethics Complaint on Senator Telo T. Taitague-

Joe Cruz <sjosephcruz671@gmail.com>

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To: speaker@guamlegislature.org <speaker@guamlegislature.org>

Bcc: news@guampdn.com <news@guampdn.com>

April 12, 2021

Honorable Therese M. Terlaje

Speaker, 36th Guam Legislature

Guam Congress Building

163 Chalan Santo Papa

Hagatna, Guam 96910

Re: Official Ethics Complaint on Senator Telo T. Taitague- Crime of Moral Turpitude

Dear Speaker Terlaje;

This letter is being submitted as an official Ethics Complaint on Senator Telo T. Taitague.

Recently, minutes from a November 23, 2016 Executive Session of the Guam Visitors Bureau's Board of Directors was made public. The transcripts note the Board's discussion of then Deputy General Manager, Telo Taitague's incompetence associated with her work performance. There were also references with employees concerned on her tendency of bypassing protocol and directly interfering with vendors. However, what was the most concerning comment in the document was a mention by Board Member Bruce Kloppenburg who was quoted by stating, "*then there was the kickback*".

Board Member Kloppenburg was referencing a high-end purse, which Ms. Taitague received from a vendor, that was originally meant for an employee raffle. Two employees were apparently involved in this "kickback" ordeal, and only one was implicated and was made to apologize and return the gift. Ms. Taitague, who was clearly a protected political hire from the Governor's office (based on the discussions in those transcripts) was never disciplined, was never required to apologize, and kept the purse.

GVB had a contractual relationship with the vendor who provided the "gift" to Ms. Taitague, which in essence makes this "kickback" even more concerning. § 6110 of 3 GCA stipulates:

*"Notwithstanding any other provision of law, all candidates for any elected public office, board or commission shall not have been convicted of a felony and shall not have been convicted of a misdemeanor involving criminal sexual conduct or **crime of moral turpitude**."*

Wikipedia defines Moral Turpitude as "*an act or behavior that gravely violates the sentiment or accepted standard of the community*.". While Ms. Taitague, was not charged with a crime, due to her political connections, evidence is clearly noted in official transcripts that she indeed accepted a "kickback". For many in the community, this is not

an accepted standard for someone who serves in public service, and more importantly for one in a position of authority.

§ 15201 and § 15202 of 4 GCA stipulates language associated with public employees (inclusive of unclassified employees, as Ms. Taitague was during the stated period, she accepted the “kickback”) who receive “gifts” valued at more than \$200. Did Ms. Taitague submit a disclosure statement identifying the acceptance of a gift by GVB’s vendor? If not, this would constitute as a violation, thus was Ms. Taitague issued a citation? Was she excused because of her political association with the Governor’s office at the time? These are questions associated with ethics, which the public demands answers to.

The community deserves a clear resolve by this legislative body to determine if a crime of moral turpitude was indeed committed by Senator Telo Taitague during her tenure as the Deputy General Manager of GVB. If she sees no issues with accepting a “kickback” as the second in command of a public corporation, imagine her integrity with her actions as an elected official, where additional temptations of accepting gifts exist. It is with this, that this letter serves as an official request of an Ethics Complaint and Review on Senator Taitague’s actions.

Ms. Taitague certainly has her share of ethical issues and question marks over the years as a public figure, which clearly identifies her morals and character with decision making. She also has a history related to gambling, inclusive of her association with underground games operated illicitly throughout the island. Studies have shown that individuals with gambling problems tend to also have financial issues, which may explain her actions.

Ironically, Senator Sabina Perez has recently introduced Bill 94-36, which requires an ethics training for all government of Guam employees. Senator Taitague is listed as a co-sponsor. It seems that the Senator should not be involved in mandating government employees to take a course on ethics, rather she needs to be among the first individuals enrolled in this course.

Here are some items for consideration:

1. In 2013, while working at the Governor’s Office, she was sued by Ms. Arminda Tuazon. Apparently the two ladies were “social gambling” and got into an argument associated with a bet where one lost money. Ms. Taitague was asked to leave the premises immediately as she created a disruptive environment which would draw the attention of local authorities, and considering this was supposedly a questionably run operation, the organizers were concerned. Nonetheless, Ms. Taitague continued to harass Ms. Tuazon for days, which led to a restraining order on Ms. Taitague and eventually a lawsuit.
2. A September 2015 online edition of the *Sunstar Philippines* notes a meeting in Cebu, Philippines, which then-Deputy General Manager of GVB, Telo Taitague was in attendance with a General Manager of a local hotel, and among the discussions was a conversation which included attracting a casino resort to Guam. This meeting was paid for by Guam taxpayers, and this was despite Guam voters rejecting a casino industry in Guam on more than one occasion.
3. With the known ongoing federal investigation into an illegally operated online gaming syndicate, which includes several local law enforcement officers, many in

the community have stated that Ms. Taitague, who is well known in the local gambling community, and is a frequent visitor of game rooms, is part of the investigation.

4. Interestingly in an interview with a morning radio talk show a few weeks ago, when asked if she gambles, Senator Taitague stated that she does not consider herself a gambler, and “occasionally” frequents bingos for fundraisers and the games of chance at the liberation day carnivals. What she failed to note are her regular appearances at high stakes card games, game rooms, and underground events such as where she had the confrontation with Ms. Tuazon. There is also that picture of her at the slot machines in a Vegas casino circulating around social media.

5. There are issues outside of the gambling realm, which also question the morals and decision making of Ms. Telo Taitague. In a 2020 financial disclosure report to the Guam Election Commission, Ms. Taitague reported that she owns a business, Telophoto, with an estimated value of \$10,000. However, Ms. Taitague claims that in 2019, she earned \$12,630 from this entity. There are no online mentions of the existence of Telophoto, and it is very unusual for a business’s value to be lower than the annual income it generates, as it usually is the opposite. This questions where this additional income was generated from.

6. The Guam Legislature’s website states that for the period of October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020, Senator Taitague issued a contract for Media Design, to Mr. Myong Joon Hong, a resident of California. The objective was to create campaign advertising, at taxpayer expenses. Can elected officials utilize their office budgets to aid in paying for campaign ads or is this illegal?

In summary, we request the Ethics Committee of the 36th Guam Legislature to review the arguments provided in this letter summarizing the actions of Senator Telo Taitague in committing unethical actions, including a crime of moral turpitude during her tenure at the Guam Visitors Bureau, as it correlates to whether she qualifies to remain as a Senator. Standards need to be set for elected officials, and terms such as integrity and high character need to not only be held to the highest of standards, but “kickbacks” should never be accepted by those in public office. We are certain that after a thorough investigation of the allegations, that the Ethics Committee of the 36th Guam Legislature will agree and recommend that Senator Taitague needs to be immediately removed from office.

Joseph F. Cruz