

Hafa Adai GVB Board of Directors,

We, the concerned management and staff of the Guam Visitors Bureau, are writing this letter to bring to your attention, a very serious matter that is currently affecting the work productivity, environment and professionalism of our daily operations of the bureau.

As our current policies and procedures only provide power to the President and CEO, to handle all personnel matters, we are left without direction on how to move forward with a class action complaint against the professionalism and conduct of our current President and CEO. Understanding that the Board of Directors of the Guam Visitors Bureau oversees the management and employment of the president, we would like to elevate this issue for your consideration and action.

With the board's appointment of our current President and CEO, Ms. Pilar Laguaña, GVB has understandably experienced many new changes and demands in our processes and workflows from senior management. However, we feel these changes have not been for the betterment of the bureau but rather its detriment. While the president is meant to guide and support the daily operations of GVB, in line with the board's vision, this has not been the case. Instead, staff are experiencing a lack of direction and more importantly a lack of support from senior management.

Work Productivity

This letter comes at a time when a new fiscal year is upon us, and we have had time to allow our leadership to settle into their new roles. However, after nearly 10 months working under their direction, or lack thereof, we have experienced unnecessary demands, excessive administrative paperwork, repetitive meetings, and unreasonable deadlines. This new leadership style has only succeeded in overburdening employees with more paperwork yielding less productivity.

The underlying sentiment is that the current president is crippling the overall operation of the bureau. Examples of this include limiting the authority of classified directors to make decisions relevant to their departments, delaying the execution of other projects by requiring additional paperwork and briefings on thoroughly vetted plans. There seems to be a perceived mistrust that senior management has towards staff by requiring previously passed motions, projects and proposals to be brought back to committee levels and then readdressed by the board before a commitment is made. Even after the approval of the board, the project must be placed in an approved format without deviation for a signature to proceed, creating yet another layer of "red tape" in our daily operations.

It seems we are unable to move forward with new projects and proposals that will benefit the bureau because of the added procedures and the limited authority afforded to directors and staff. With the President's demanding schedule, it is very difficult to get all these projects and proposals reviewed by her in a timely manner. This leaves our staff, representatives and industry partners, experiencing a delay in crucial time-sensitive

projects simply because of having to unnecessarily wait for approval and confirmation to proceed.

Environment

As it currently stands, an overwhelming sense of micromanagement practices and growing mistrust from senior management has consumed the bureau. We have become an environment of perceived hostility which has created a “do as you’re told” or “stay in your lane” office dynamic with senior management.

Unfortunately, some staff members have expressed these concerns to other managers but are reluctant to elevate it further, in fear of retaliation from the president, something that has been occurring even before she took on her current position. To substantiate this statement, staff have provided various testimonies regarding their specific interactions and concerns with senior management, but have requested anonymity, to avoid any further discrimination or punishment.

This sentiment is shared amongst an alarming number of employees across all departments who have expressed their observations and experiences with these perceived acts of retaliation from senior management. Some forms of “soft retaliation” include prohibiting certain staff to travel, using travel as a means of reward or punishment rather than a functionality of work, and only affording acting leadership roles to the same set of individuals not providing a fair rotation among other staff. This is coupled with other bullying tactics like belittling staff and the use of abrasive tones in and out of the office. Needless to say, this has all contributed to an extremely low office morale and negative working environment.

Professionalism

While we respect the position of our President and CEO and have produced more work to meet her demands, we cannot remain silent when management and staff are not afforded the same respect as professionals in our technical disciplines. Our current president demands the respect and support of all her initiatives from all levels of staff, however, she does not reciprocate this professionalism. Senior management constantly questions employees, even after project conditions, decision parameters, and objectives are clearly vetted, explained and discussed with them.

Not only is there a lack of trust and support with staff, but there also seems to be no sense of true investment into new initiatives that may benefit the bureau. On multiple occasions when employees provide recommendations and innovative ideas to enhance our programs and efforts, we are met with delay tactics or disapprovals with no logical reasoning or justification, creating an environment of paralysis rather than inspiration.

More recently, senior management has exercised an increased lack of transparency and consistency in almost every aspect of the bureau’s existing processes, ranging from personnel matters, office communications and even hiring practices.

There is an injustice being done to the bureau and the industry that may not be evident from the outside looking in. The purpose of this letter is to bring these injustices to our governing body's attention in hopes they are addressed and corrected before moving fully into the new fiscal year.

After numerous discussions amongst all levels of employees, we have been able to narrow down some key areas that the board may consider to help the bureau move forward. While these are merely recommendations to help rebuild our efficiency, we encourage the board to explore other solutions that will help move the bureau out of its current state of stagnation.

Staff Recommendations:

1. Restore the abilities and power of the classified directors to manage their departments. The president should be able to provide guidance and direction, but not complete oversight of the daily operations of the departments.
2. Reevaluate the efficiency of GVB's current Personnel Policies & Procedures and ensure consistent practices are followed and employees' rights are clearly defined.
3. Create a safe mechanism to report incidences, for those that fall victim to any form of retribution or bullying tactics by senior management. Perhaps establishing a panel of board members to hear the concerns of anonymous employees over serious matters such as these.

We are submitting this class action complaint in good faith that our Board of Directors will recognize our collective voice of concern for the bureau. We humbly ask for your guidance to enable staff to again work in a safe, professional environment and be afforded the true support we need to carry out the mission of the bureau.

In nearly 10 months, our talented group of professionals has been reduced to mere drones expected to carry out the agenda of one person. We realize that we all answer to the president, as she leads the bureau with the responsibility to ensure the tourism industry flourishes as an instrument to derive maximum benefits for the people of Guam. However, we also recognize that for this to be achieved...we need change.

If the board finds that it needs more information regarding this very serious issue, the concerned management and staff are willing to meet with the board, without Senior Management's presence or knowledge, to provide detailed testimonies and answer any inquiries.

Very Respectfully,

The Concerned Management and Staff
of the Guam Visitors Bureau