



Vice-Chairman, Committee on Education, Public Safety and the Arts • Vicechairman, Committee on Emergency Response, Military and Veteran Affairs, Border Safety and Mayors Council • Member, Committee on Rules • Member, Committee on Maritime Transportation, Air Transportation, Parks, Tourism, Higher Education and the Advancement of Women, Youth, and Senior Citizens

A Statement from Senator Dueñas and Vice Speaker Tina Muña Barnes

The Inaction of the Committee Chair Cannot And Should Not Be Allowed To Hinder Progress

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 25, 2024

(Hagåtña, Guam) - It is clear that the Committee Chair responsible for Bill 175 has failed to perform her duties throughout the legislative process. Despite ample opportunity, Senator Perez did not address or complete necessary amendments, leaving critical work undone.

My office has stepped in to complete these amendments, directly addressing the key concern publicly raised by Senator Perez. These amendments have been incorporated into the substituted version of the bill that I will motion to accept as substituted on the floor. Given that these necessary changes have been made, there should be no reason for Senator Perez to withhold her support for Bill 175.

“Our people deserve elected officials who will fight for their right to build on the lands they own. The ongoing delays in passing crucial legislation are causing unnecessary hardship and frustration. Aren't we all tired of seeing our residents leave the island because of these avoidable obstacles? By stalling the legislative process, we are not only ignoring advancements in technology but also prolonging the pain and suffering of our community. This inaction by Senator Perez hurts our people and delays progress that could significantly improve their lives,” said Dueñas.

“I can only hope that those affected by this issue will choose to stay on the island, despite these challenges. It is deeply unfortunate that many will not realize the extent of this problem until they face the loss of a loved one. We must act now to ensure that our residents have the ability to build and thrive on their own land. The time for excuses is over. Let us move forward and provide our people with the support and opportunities they deserve,” added Dueñas.

“One of the most basic tenets of the Guam Legislature - and indeed any lawmaking body in America - must be that we govern by consensus. That means in the Legislature, a majority of us make decisions, take positions, and approve actions. One single senator - no matter their title - should not have the power to pass a bill or make a bill fail,” said Vice Speaker Tina Rose Muña Barnes.

Senator Christopher M. Dueñas
Suite 101B, 259 Martyr St., Hagåtña, Guam 96910 | (671) 989-9554 | chris@guamlegislature.org
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Office of Senator Christopher M. Dueñas
I Mina'trentai Siette Na Liheslaturan Guåhan • 37th Guam Legislature

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“I thank the author for keeping my office close as this legislation was amended to incorporate the concerns of citizens who rightfully want to protect Guam’s most precious resource: our fresh water aquifer, which supplies an irreplaceable amount of drinking water for our island. I think the fact that this change was so easily drafted shows that this body was willing to hear the understandable feedback from our community and amend Bill 175 to better protect our environment. And any rumors or assertions to the contrary were either misguided, misinformed, or misleading,” concluded Barnes.

I want to extend my gratitude to the cosponsors of Bill 175: Senators Frank Blas Jr., Jesse A. Lujan, Thomas J. Fisher, and Dwayne T.D. San Nicolas. Additionally, I thank the following senators who voted to place the bill onto the session agenda: Tina Rose Muña Barnes, Joe S. San Agustin, Roy A.B. Quinata and William A. Parkinson.

I urge our colleagues to join us in supporting this bill without further delay.

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