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Chairperson

Committee on Environment, Revenue and Taxation, Labor, Procurement,
and Statistics, Research, and Planning

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For Immediate Release

Speaker Terlaje and Senator Perez Introduce Tandem Legislation to Strengthen GEPA's Enforcement Capacity

Hagåtña, Guam — Speaker Therese Terlaje introduced Bill 165-36, co-sponsored by Senator Sabina Flores Perez, which aims to enhance GEPA's enforcement by removing the caps on fines for civil penalties for Guam soil erosion and sediment violations. Senator Perez introduced bill 166-36, co-sponsored by Speaker Therese Terlaje, which seeks additional funding in order to expand the enforcement capacity of Guam Environmental Protection Agency (GEPA).

In the past decades, the regulatory demands of the GEPA to enforce laws that ensure the protection of the health of our environment and people have increased significantly due to expansion of environmental laws, increased permitting applications for construction projects and increased incidences of violations, such as illegal dumping.

“GEPA is experiencing a staffing shortage that will be exacerbated by the anticipated retirement of key employees within the next three years. The lack of new workers combined with the loss of institutional knowledge poses a serious threat to our environmental protections. Increasing regulatory capacity is urgently needed through recruitment and retention of qualified staff and evaluating pay scales to determine equity within the agency and to match those in the private sector or federal government,” said the Senator.

According to 11 GCA Ch. 28 § 28112 20% of use tax collected in the previous fiscal year shall be appropriated to the Guam Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Cleanup Fund to cover the costs associated with preserving Guam's natural resources. “This source of funding can assist GEPA in monitoring compliance and in prevention of environmental damage,” said Senator Perez.

Senator Perez added, “Both Bill 165-36 and Bill 166-36 are essential to support GEPA as part of a coordinated response amongst our agencies, policymakers, and community. Our natural environment is a precious resource, but it is fragile, and we must always make a collective effort to protect our environment for us and our future generations.”

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