

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION

To amend Article IV, Section 2 of the Constitution, by expanding a State's ability to provide assistance to not merely parochial schools, but also other parochial establishments which provide secular services to the entire community.

Article IV, Section 2 currently reads:

Section 2. No law may be passed respecting an establishment of religion or impairing the free exercise of religion, except that assistance may be provided to parochial schools for non-religious purposes.

Amend Section 2 to read as follows:

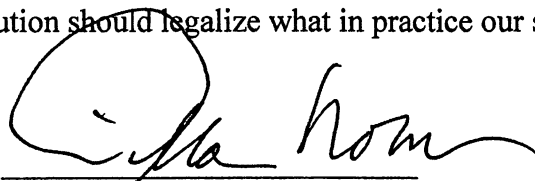
Section 2. No law may be passed respecting an establishment of religion or impairing the free exercise of religion, except that assistance may be provided to parochial schools and other parochial establishments for ~~non-religious~~ secular purposes.

PURPOSE AND INTENT OF AMENDMENT:

Churches in Micronesia often sponsor programs that benefit the entire community, not merely the congregation of that particular church. These programs include schools, sports centers, community meeting venues, typhoon shelters, and shelters for victims of violence. These programs prioritize service to the community over the advancement of religion. Some States have provided assistance for these projects by virtue of necessity despite the establishment of religion clause. For example, on some outer islands, the church may be the only entity capable of sponsoring a typhoon relief shelter. It is universally recognized throughout Micronesia that churches sponsor benevolent projects for the entire community without purposefully advancing their religion in the process.

The State should be able to help these organizations advance secular projects without risking a violation of the establishment of religion section in Article IV, Section 2. This amendment would memorialize the will of the people that has already been put into practice within various States.

The Constitution should legalize what in practice our society has already accepted.

Introducer: 
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