

FSM Information Services

Message from the President

My Fellow Micronesians: Through Peace, Friendship, Cooperation, & Love in Our Common Humanity We Will Emerge From the COVID-19 Pandemic as a Stronger Nation & A Stronger World

My fellow Micronesians,

Mogethin, Ran anim, Len wo, and Kaselehlie.

As I near the end of my 14-day quarantine period and reflect upon today being the two-month anniversary of our original Public Health Emergency Declaration on January 31st, and as our Nation witnesses ever-changing daily norms at home and abroad, it strikes me as appropriate that we review where our canoe is today and where we imagine our canoe might be going in the near future over the course of these challenging times during this COVID-19 coronavirus Pandemic.

Let us firstly review our accomplishments immediately followed by our intentions, for the former are many and the latter are plentiful still. As of today, March 31st 2020, the Federated States of Micronesia remains COVID-19 free. Nor do we have any Persons Under Investigation at present. This is at least partly the result of dedicated stewardship across all levels of our society, from the Executive and Legislative Branches of the National Government to the respective State Governments and even at the municipal level. In particular, our Department of Health & Social Affairs and the FSM COVID-19 Task Force, along with the respective State Departments of Health & State COVID-19 Task Forces, have shown exemplary professionalism and a patriotic sense of duty in carrying out their solemn mission to protect the health and wellbeing of our Nation's citizens and residents.

Our collective Task Forces have been working in coordination and around the clock to ensure our Nation's safety. In the coming weeks, I look forward to illuminating you all on what this looks like in terms of financial support from our friends, allies, and development partners. In the meantime, I have consented to our States' requests to largely prohibit the disembarkation of aircraft passengers from international commercial carriers until additional quarantine facilities and isolation facilities are adequately developed.

Further, I am proud to tell you that I have very reliable information that in the coming weeks our Nation will acquire the capacity to test for COVID-19 within our Nation's borders. I have demanded this, and we are committed to taking every action necessary to ensure its occurrence.

I recognize and appreciate that there are some who would seek to criticize the efforts of our travel restriction and quarantine processes. I would suggest to those critics to be mindful that every expert was once a beginner, and that if we measure success as the prevention of COVID-19 in reaching our shores, and the development of contingency plans for its arrival, that we have met, and continue to meet, these metrics. Pessimism, like misery, is fond of company—but it wins no friends just as it wins no battles. Our collective leadership across the Nation is committed to winning this battle against COVID-19 for you, your family, and your country. But we cannot do it alone: we need you to join us.

Your Government, far from being a single entity that is separate from you, is all around you—for we are you, just as you are us. We are your brothers, your sisters, and your neighbors. So too, then, do we need you just as you need us. I call upon your continued participation in endeavors such as social distancing and superior hygiene practices to ensure our Nation's long-term success against the COVID-19 Pandemic. Wash your hands; avoid large social gatherings; and, above all, maintain your Micronesian sense of empathy and compassion for your fellows. You are I as I am you. To be good, and to do good, is all we have to do.

I am a personal witness to our States' quarantine and health protection programming, as have been many members of my Cabinet and my personal staff. We are unanimous in our consensus that their diligent work and leadership are worthy of note and worthy of merit, and so I say: Thank You—Thank You So Much, to all of our State Governments and their many hardworking public servants for their vigilance during this uncertain time.

My fellow Micronesians—particularly those abroad,

I am increasingly aware that many of you in Guam, Hawaii, and the U.S. Mainland are finding your life's circumstances altered by the COVID-19 Pandemic. In the interest of the collective good, I have requests for your behavior—but I also have news to share, and promises to make.

I call upon all of you abroad to heed the advice of your host Governments and their medical professionals as if their commentary were from the Bible itself. This coronavirus has no agenda; it is apolitical, and it is amoral, for it simply IS. Yet, the danger it poses—if not to you, then to a member of your family or your community—is real.

I have received reports of Micronesians continuing to gather in large groups in locales such as Guam, Portland, Utah, and Cincinnati, for feasts and for funerals. I urge you to consider abstaining from such gatherings until such a time when the COVID-19 Pandemic has been effectively contained. That day WILL come, but the longer we expose ourselves and our families the farther away that day will be. Have confidence in your host Governments and their medical professionals, and have confidence in following their advice, because the circulation of confidence is stronger than the circulation of money.

On that subject, if you are a citizen abroad and you have recently lost your job due to the COVID-19 Pandemic you should be informed that you are entitled to seek unemployment benefits. Further, on Friday March 27th, 2020, His Excellency Donald J. Trump signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, & Economic Security (CARES) Act. A key component of this Act is that individuals who filed U.S. taxes in Calendar Years 2018 and/or 2019, including citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia, are eligible to receive up to \$1,200.00 depending on your income level. This would not happen immediately but sometime later during 2020. I encourage those of you in the United States to consult with your nearest Consulate or our Embassy to determine what benefits you might be able to access.

Earlier this morning I held a videoconference with our Chief of Staff & Cabinet to, among other matters, seek the latest information on the development of our economic recovery plan. In due course, we are presenting this economic recovery package to the leadership at Congress so that the Nation can jointly roll it out to our private sector and citizens who are affected throughout the course of this Pandemic. I intend to call a Special Session prior to the Regular Session in May to work with the leadership in Congress on this economic recovery package for our Nation.

I am aware that a number of you wish to return home but, through our travel restrictions, are unable to do so. While I will never sacrifice the safety of our citizens here at home, I give you my word that the Panuelo-George Administration is continuously seeking all available pathways towards ensuring that citizens wishing to return home may do so. This may take time as our States improve their quarantine and isolation facility capacity, but we are resolved to finding a solution.

My fellow Micronesians—as well as our Nation's friends, allies, and development partners,

It is okay to be humbled by this situation: lives are at risk, and many livelihoods are in turmoil. Undoubtedly we will all feel grief, feel sorrow, or feel scared—it's OKAY to feel how you are feeling during these challenging or uncertain times. This is to be expected. I would suggest to you that we

be as upbeat and optimistic as we possibly can be, and remain vigilant in practicing measures that will minimize health and safety risks.

However!—I wish to share with you all a thing that I find to be rather beautiful. This Pandemic may be the first time for most of us alive today that we have a truly shared experience. For the first time in living memory, what is true and real for you is also true and real for me. What is true and real today for a Micronesian in Weno is as true and real for an American in New York, a Japanese in Tokyo, a Chinese in Beijing, or an Australian in Sydney.

If we allow it to, this Pandemic can bring us all a sense of sympathy and empathy for one another. We can emerge from this Pandemic not only as a stronger Nation, but as a stronger World—united against adversity, whether it take the form of a public health emergency, an injustice such as human trafficking, or an existential threat such as Climate Change.

My fellow Micronesians,

We cannot say what the future will bring—but know that our collective actions will shape it. I promise to continue faithfully serving as your Public Servant committed to the public good, committed to steering our canoe in calm and in storm until we reach our destination, to ensure that we overcome COVID-19 and, once overtaken, that we strike in solidarity against all other threats to human life.

I humbly ask that you all join me in taking actions today for our Nation's prosperity tomorrow.



Pictured Above: His Excellency David W. Panuelo, Ninth President of the Federated States of Micronesia

