

Public Law 95-157
95th Congress

An Act

To create the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands, implementing article IV of the Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America.

Nov. 8, 1977

[S. 2149]

Whereas section 401 of the Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America, approved by section 1 of the joint resolution of March 24, 1976 (Public Law 94-241; 90 Stat. 263), provides that the United States will establish a District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands: Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That (a) there is hereby established for and within the Northern Mariana Islands a court of record to be known as the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands. The Northern Mariana Islands shall constitute a part of the same judicial circuit of the United States as Guam. Terms of court shall be held on Saipan and at such other places and at such times as the court may designate by rule or order.

Northern
Mariana Islands.
District Court,
establishment.
48 USC 1694.

(b) (1) The President shall, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, appoint a judge for the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands who shall hold office for the term of eight years and until his successor is chosen and qualified, unless sooner removed by the President for cause. The judge shall receive a salary payable by the United States which shall be at the rate prescribed for judges of the United States district courts.

District Court
Judge,
appointment and
term.

Salary.

(2) The Chief Judge of the Ninth Judicial Circuit of the United States may assign justices of the High Court of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands or judges of courts of record of the Northern Mariana Islands who are licensed attorneys in good standing or a circuit or district judge of the ninth circuit, including a judge of the District Court of Guam who is appointed by the President, or the Chief Justice of the United States may assign any other United States circuit or district judge with the consent of the judge so assigned and of the chief judge of his circuit to serve temporarily as a judge in the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands whenever such an assignment is necessary for the proper dispatch of the business of the court. Such judges shall have all the powers of a judge of the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands, including the power to appoint any person to a statutory position, or to designate a depository of funds or a newspaper for publication of legal notices.

Judges,
temporary
assignment.

(3) The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, a United States attorney and United States marshal for the Northern Mariana Islands to whose offices the provisions of chapters 35 and 37 of title 28, respectively, United States Code, shall apply.

United States
attorney and
marshal.

28 USC 541,
561.

(4) If the President appoints a judge for the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands or a United States attorney or a United States marshal for the Northern Mariana Islands who at that time is serving in the same capacity in another district, the appointment shall, without prejudice to a subsequent appointment, be for the unexpired term of such judge or officer.

(c) The provisions of chapters 43 and 49 of title 28, United States Code, and the rules heretofore or hereafter promulgated and made effective by the Congress or the Supreme Court of the United States pursuant to titles 11, 18, 28, United States Code, shall apply to the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands and appeals therefrom where appropriate, except as otherwise provided in articles IV and V of the covenant provided by the Act of March 24, 1976 (90 Stat. 263). The terms "attorney for the government" and "United States attorney" as used in the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure (rule 54(c)) shall, when applicable to cases arising under the laws of the Northern Mariana Islands, include the attorney general of the Northern Mariana Islands or any other person or persons as may be authorized by the laws of the Northern Marianas to act therein.

Jurisdiction.
48 USC 1694a.
USC prec. title 1.

SEC. 2. (a) The District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands shall have the jurisdiction of a district court of the United States, except that in all causes arising under the Constitution, treaties, or laws of the United States, it shall have jurisdiction regardless of the sum or value of the matter in controversy.

(b) The district court shall have original jurisdiction in all causes in the Northern Mariana Islands not described in subsection (a) jurisdiction over which is not vested by the Constitution or laws of the Northern Mariana Islands in a court or courts of the Northern Mariana Islands. In causes brought in the district court solely on the basis of this subsection, the district court shall be considered a court of the Northern Mariana Islands for the purposes of determining the requirements of indictment by grand jury or trial by jury.

Appellate jurisdiction.
48 USC 1694b.

SEC. 3. The district court shall have such appellate jurisdiction as the Constitution and laws of the Northern Mariana Islands provide. Appeals to the district court shall be heard and determined by an appellate division of the court consisting of three judges, of whom two shall constitute a quorum. The judge appointed for the court by the President shall be the presiding judge of the appellate division and shall preside therein unless disqualified or otherwise unable to act. The other judges who are to sit in the appellate division at any session shall be designated by the presiding judge from among the judges assigned to the court from time to time pursuant to subsection 1(b) (2): *Provided, however*, That only one of them shall be a judge of a court of record of the Northern Mariana Islands. The concurrence of two judges shall be necessary to any decision by the district court on the merits of an appeal but the presiding judge alone may make any appropriate orders with respect to an appeal prior to the hearing and determination thereof on the merits and may dismiss an appeal for want of jurisdiction or failure to take or prosecute it in accordance with the applicable law or rules of procedure.

Relationship between district and local courts.
48 USC 1694c.

SEC. 4. (a) The relations between the courts established by the Constitution or laws of the United States and the courts of the Northern Mariana Islands with respect to appeals, certiorari, removal of causes, the issuance of writs of habeas corpus, and other matters or proceedings shall be governed by the laws of the United States pertaining to the relations between the courts of the United States and the courts of the several States in such matters and proceedings, except as otherwise provided in article IV of the covenant: *Provided*, That for the first fifteen years following the establishment of an appellate court of the Northern Mariana Islands the United States court of appeals for the judicial circuit which includes the Northern Mariana Islands shall have jurisdiction of appeals from all final decisions of the highest court of the Northern Mariana Islands from which a deci-

sion could be had in all cases involving the Constitution, treaties, or laws of the United States, or any authority exercised thereunder, unless those cases are reviewable in the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands pursuant to section 3 of this Act. USC prec. title 1.

(b) Those portions of title 28 of the United States Code which apply to Guam or the District Court of Guam shall be applicable to the Northern Mariana Islands or the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands, respectively, except as otherwise provided in article IV of the covenant. The district court established by this Act shall be a district court as that term is used in section 3006A of title 18, United States Code.

SEC. 5. This Act shall come into force upon its approval or at the time proclaimed by the President for the Constitution of the Northern Mariana Islands to become effective, whichever is the later date.

Effective date.
48 USC 1694d.

SEC. 6. There is authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act.

Appropriation
authorization.
48 USC 1694e.

Approved November 8, 1977.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

SENATE REPORT No. 95-475 (Comm. on the Judiciary).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 123 (1977):

Oct. 13, considered and passed Senate.

Oct. 25, considered and passed House.