

**Republic of Palau**  
*Office of the President*

Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr.  
*President*

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August 20, 2013  
Serial No. 13-319

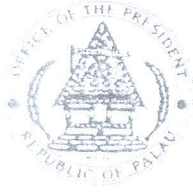
Honorable Sabino Anastacio  
Speaker  
House of Delegates  
9<sup>th</sup> Olbiil Era Kelulau  
P.O. Box 8  
Koror, PW 96940

Re: Signing Statement for House Bill No. 9-13-1S, HD3, SD3.

Dear Speaker Anastacio:

This bill is a companion bill to Senate Bill No. 9-45, which I recently referred back to the Olbiil Era Kelulau due to issues more fully set forth in my referral letter. However, these two bills cannot be considered separately from one another. To enact one of these two bills means that we must enact the other bill. The reason for this is because the Senate Bill focuses mostly on ensuring the solvency of the Social Security Fund, while the House Bill focuses on increasing the benefits provided to our surviving spouses. The House Bill allows surviving spouses to 'double-dip' from the Social Security Fund. If a surviving spouse is eligible for retirement benefits and the surviving spouse benefit, then they may receive both benefits. The end result is that the benefit that surviving spouses may receive is substantially increased under this bill. In fact, the benefit may be doubled in some instances.

In addition to amending the surviving spouse benefit, the bill has two other amendments. The first amendment is to increase the minimum monthly basic benefit to be received to \$148. This is an amendment that complements the Senate Bill, which does something similar by changing the way the monthly basic benefit is calculated. The second amendment is that the bill earmarks the 15% of the foreign fishing revenue received by the national government pursuant to RPPL No. 8-47 to be earmarked to be deposited into the Social Security Fund for Fiscal Years 2014, 2015, and 2016. This amendment earmarks certain funds to fund the social security obligations of the national government as an employer for the next three (3) years. This is an obligation that the national government already has. The only real effect of this amendment is that the funds to fulfill this obligation are now earmarked.



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In one sense, this is an easy bill to sign—it is easy to provide increased social security benefits to our surviving spouses because we can all identify with the pain of losing a loved one. However, I urge the Olbiil Era Kelulau to be mindful of the other side of the other side of the equation: the continued solvency of the Social Security Fund. When we increase benefits on one hand, we must take steps to secure the continued solvency of the Social Security Fund with the other hand. Such is the balance that is required in order to maintain a financially healthy social security system: we must always be mindful of the amount of money going into the system compared to the amount of money that is coming out of the system, and how that money is being distributed.

I am pleased to report that just as I was finalizing this signing statement the Olbiil Era Kelulau did, in fact, re-pass Senate Bill No. 9-45 in accordance with my recommended changes. These two bills symbolize a Olbiil Era Kelulau that is working for the people, with each other, and with the President's Office. This is not to say that we will always agree with one another, but we will strive to develop a working relationship where we can work together constructively to build our nation. For that, I thank you, and I look forward to continuing to build on this relationship.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr.", is written over a faint, circular watermark of the President's Office seal.

Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr.  
President  
Republic of Palau

