

***Speaker Therese Terlaje Address***  
***January 5, 2022***

Buenas yan Håfa adai, to my colleagues. Mañeluhu yan Manaiñahu, friends, family, neighbors, colleagues, and the proud people of Guam

As I stand here today, I think about all the great leaders that have graced these hallowed halls who have cleared this path for us. Their acts of service, leadership, and fearlessness continue to inspire me.

In March of 1949, concerned about limited legislative powers, the Guam Congress staged an act of defiance in protest against the naval government drawing national attention in its quest for self-governance, which has since become known as “The Walkout.”

Assemblyman Won Pat stated, “The members of the House of Assembly consider that the powers of the three branches of government must be defined. It is further believed that only then can you and your staff, the Legislative and Judicial branches of the Naval Government, assure the people of Guam of the full functioning of the democratic processes of government. In the meantime, the members of the Assembly do not feel that they can appear to have the status of a legislative body without the proper powers to carry out that function.”

Every legislature since “The Walkout” has inherited the responsibility to build upon the progress of our predecessors who fought for more legislative authority, for what was at one time an advisory body to a plenary power.

We must continue to embody their spirit today and every day forward by diligently and responsibly exercising our authorities of oversight and policymaking.

This beautiful Guam Congress building symbolizes the determination of our great statesmen who fought for self-governance so that we are empowered with greater authority over our land, resources, and the administration of laws that affect our lives.

Henceforward, we have the privilege, colleagues, of doing the people's work in this very significant and historical place, a thought not lost upon me as I enter these doors every day.

It is incumbent upon us in the 37th Guam Legislature, to uphold their legacy, to promote opportunity and the prosperity of all the people of Guam.

Today, I am proud to share this room with 14 colleagues, some returning from the previous term, some returning to the legislature from prior terms, as well as those who have taken up elected office for the first time.

It takes courage to make the decision to seek public office, and to serve in this capacity will require our self-sacrifice and complete dedication to ethics and equality. I thank you for your courage. And for your willingness to serve our people, you have my utmost respect.

The newly elected senators swearing in before you today have promised and now committed to deliver on:

- A safer Guam
- Education and prioritizing our children
- Affordable housing
- Universal healthcare
- Greater access to healthcare
- Sustainability and environmental conservation and stewardship
- Economic diversification and support for Guam's businesses
- Reduce poverty
- Better access to resources for disabilities
- Combating corruption
- Combating drugs
- Transparency and Accountability
- Restoring pride back into our community
- Reining in Government Spending
- Continue a reduced BPT and an equal playing field for businesses in Guam
- Reducing government red-tape
- Fixing Procurement
- Fighting inflation
- Creating jobs

- Resources for Department of Agriculture for animal control
- Balanced government powers

With a combination of life experience, legislative experience, business acumen, public service, statesmanship, boldness, and fresh perspectives on longstanding issues, I expect no less than that they will deliver.

As a body, if we are to accomplish this bold and diverse agenda. We must work together in a bi-partisan effort. We must place personal politics aside. And we must engage in healthy debate based on truth and facts to find long-term solutions to many of the issues that have plagued our island all these years.

More and more every day, families are struggling with the decision to leave Guam in search of a better life. As duly elected public servants, we must address this crisis head on and do everything in our power to bring that better life here, for those we have sworn to serve.

This 37th Guam Legislature must shift our strategy from recovery to prosperity. Colleagues, in a matter of weeks, we will be receiving the Executive Budget request for Fiscal Year 2024. We will have to roll up our sleeves and find ways to not only ensure the financial health of the government of Guam, but to enact policy to promote the health and well-being of all our families, by providing resource assistance for our residents most at risk, to providing better training and opportunities for the working class, access to better health care here on Guam, and safer communities.

Through conservative budgeting, the Guam Legislature has realized excess revenues every year since Fiscal Year 2019 of approximately \$117 M based on audited surpluses and another \$103 M surplus for unaudited Fiscal Year 2022.

This conservative approach to budgeting and spending has benefited not only the government of Guam by eliminating the deficit, but allowed for the stabilization of Guam's economy.

Additionally, this body has made progress in ensuring the protection of Guam's rich land and cultural resources through efforts on many fronts including reform,

the allocation of better resources for environmental protection, and the fight for transparency of the utilization of federal excess lands and federal funds.

This newly elected body must take the progress that has already been made, use it as a roadmap, and apply common sense and practical approaches to find even better solutions for what lies in store for us during this term.

Additionally, we must be unwavering in our commitment to hold robust oversight over the agencies charged with executing our new mandates, as well as long standing policy enacted by those who have come before us.

As your Speaker, I resolve to continue working to protect the power of the people, to continue to restore the people's faith in their government, to bring transparency to our processes, and to practice truth and justice so that the best ideas and solutions can be born from this 37th Guam Legislature.

Today is the first day of this short 2-year legislative term, and I am ready to work with all of you to make Guam a home where the hopes and dreams of our families are realized. This will be the true measure of the work we do here.

I want to thank my colleagues for their vote of confidence in me and I know it hasn't been a smooth path but I'm hoping and praying that going forward we will be able to work together genuinely for the people of Guam.

Si Yu'os Ma'åse' todus hamyu.  
Pues esti ha' in gågagao hamyu  
na in tayuyuti ham mo'na  
para in minagåhit yan i minaolekta.