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“Constitutional Review Committee Passes Two Proposed Amendments.”

“When we think about what actions can American Samoa take to show that it is concerned about self-determination and self-government, then this issue is one of those actions. We are a democratic government that is a Government by the People.”

On February 14th, the Constitutional Review Committee had conducted their first round of voting on two of the five major proposed amendments planned for the 2022 Constitutional Convention. The committee had spent the previous week in major discussions and the Chairman allowed for every member to have a chance to share their opinions on two proposed amendments: **The House Reapportionment Amendment** and **The Chief Justice Appointment Amendment**.

The aim of the House Reapportionment Amendment (Article II, Section 2) is to:

1. *Assure equal representation and fairness no matter where a person lives,*
2. *Assure that one person’s voting power is roughly equivalent to another’s.*

In recent years, there has been a drastic increase in population in two specific voting districts, Ituau and Tualauta. The concern among the voters of these districts is the high level of disproportion between population count (2020 Census) and the number of Representatives in the Fono. It is significantly higher than all other districts. The Committee discussed many contributing factors to this issue including the overflow of population from other Districts, the decrease of population in Maoputasi District versus the increase in Ituau and Tualauta over time, and voters registered in the Manu’a district but are settled in Tualauta. The votes were read as: Yay: 31, Nay: 13, and two members abstained from voting. The amendment will be sent to the Constitutional Convention for consideration.

The second issue is centered around the Judicial Branch and includes the Chief Justice Amendment (Article III, Section 3). “When we think about what actions can American Samoa take to show that it is concerned about self-determination and self-government,

then this issue is one of those actions. We are a democratic government that is a Government by the People.”

The aim of this amendment is to propose the following changes:

1. ~~The Secretary of Interior~~ **Governor shall appoint a Chief Justice of American Samoa and Associate Justices as he may deem necessary...**
2. **Appointed Chief Justice will be confirmed by the Legislature.**

Sending this issue to the Constitutional Convention is not new, it will be it's third time being submitted to a Constitutional Convention. Members took a careful look into the Selection Process, the Financial support, and also sought the position of the Office of Insular Affairs Field representative, Lydia Faleafine Nomura. Nomura, on behalf of the Secretary of Insular Affairs says her office has met about this and are in full support to amend this Article. The Committee also approved this amendment to feature in the Convention by voting: Yay: 36, Nay: 10. Additional clauses included in this Amendment will also be discussed at the Convention:

- Terms of Service for the appointed Chief Justice and Associate Justice,
- Department of Interior's Authority to review, overturn, and intervene on decisions made by the Court.

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