



CNMI COMMONWEALTH ACT OF 2007

The Philippine Overseas Labor Office in CNMI reported that CNMI Governor Benigno R. Fitial signed Public Law 15-108, otherwise known as the Commonwealth Act of 2007. The new law, which takes effect in January 2008, will replace the Non-Resident Workers Act of 1983.

The new law provides for an increase from 20% to 30% of workforce participation by US citizens and permanent residents within five years. It requires foreign workers arriving for the first time in CNMI to undergo an orientation at the Department of Labor upon arrival in the Commonwealth. It prohibits foreign national workers from transferring jobs at any time before or the expiry of the contract, except when a Labor Hearing Officer allows it through an Administrative Order. The new law provides an exit requirement of six months during every three-and-a-half year employment period.

The business sector reportedly expressed opposition to the new law because it would hamper their business operations. Nonresident workers (NRW) are planning a unity march to protest the passage of the law and the removal of the immigration benefit provision for long-term NRWs.