



# OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

## POHNPEI STATE GOVERNMENT

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Governor

### **Op-Ed: Why Strong Leadership in Treasury is Vital for Pohnpei's Future**

In these uncertain times, the strength and stability of our institutions are critical to the long-term prosperity of our State. One of the most vital pillars of any government is its financial management. This is not just a matter of dollars and cents but of trust, accountability, and our collective future. For Pohnpei, the cornerstone of this effort is ensuring that our financial systems and operations are aligned with the **Financial Organization and Management Act of 1987**—a law designed to safeguard transparency, accountability, and fiscal responsibility.

This is why it was not a decision made lightly when I nominated Mrs. Sihna N. Lawrence to serve as Director of Treasury and Administration. Mrs. Lawrence's experience, integrity, and unyielding commitment to compliance with the Financial Organization and Management Act made her the most qualified person for this critical position. The 11th Pohnpei Legislature agreed with this assessment, giving its advice and consent to her confirmation.

However, it has come to my attention that Mrs. Lawrence is now the subject of an investigation by the Legislature, for reasons that have yet to be formally communicated to my office. This investigation, which lacks a clear basis, threatens to undermine not just her reputation but also the essential functions of our government. The timing and nature of this inquiry raise serious concerns, especially when the focus should be on strengthening, not destabilizing, our financial stewardship.

Let us be clear: the Financial Organization and Management Act is the bedrock of our financial governance. It establishes protocols that ensure every dollar spent is properly accounted for, every process is transparent, and every action is held to the highest standards of accountability. It is a law that, if adhered to with diligence and integrity, prevents corruption, inefficiency, and misuse of public funds. Mrs. Lawrence, throughout her tenure, has done nothing less than ensure that this law is strictly followed. Her leadership has strengthened our financial systems, improved transparency, and maintained the trust of both the public and our external partners.

Mrs. Lawrence has been an unwavering guardian of these principles, even when it required difficult decisions. Her dedication to enforcing the Financial Organization and Management Act is precisely why she was nominated and why the Legislature, in its wisdom, confirmed her. At a time when fiscal discipline is more crucial than ever, we need strong leadership that puts the law—and the people of Pohnpei—first.

I firmly believe that a Treasury Director's role is not to curry favor or bend to political pressures but to serve as the State's chief steward of public resources. This requires an individual who not only understands the complexities of financial management but also has the moral courage to ensure that the law is followed to the letter—no matter the consequences. Mrs. Lawrence embodies these qualities, and her record speaks for itself.

The investigation into her conduct, absent any formal communication with my office or clear evidence of wrongdoing, is deeply troubling. It raises questions about whether this process is genuinely in pursuit of the public interest or if it is a diversion from the real issues facing our State. I urge the 11th Pohnpei Legislature to reconsider the direction of this investigation and to focus on supporting those who work tirelessly to uphold the laws that protect the integrity of our government.

In closing, let me reiterate that the role of the Treasury Director is not just about managing our finances but about safeguarding the trust that the people of Pohnpei have placed in their government. Mrs. Lawrence has proven herself to be a capable and dedicated leader who understands that financial integrity is non-negotiable. Her commitment to enforcing the Financial Organization and Management Act is precisely what we need in this critical role, and it is why I continue to stand by her.

The people of Pohnpei deserve nothing less.



**Stevenson A. Joseph**  
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State of Pohnpei