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Governor celebrates Trump executive order; talks H2B with federal officials

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The executive order would give Guam and the Marianas more flexibility on deciding how the federal designation would affect the territories.

Guam - Governor Eddie Calvo is celebrating a new executive order signed by President Donald Trump that will allow Guam to have a say in how the Marianas Trench Marine Monument affects our island. While in DC, the governor also used this opportunity to raise issues about Guam's H2B crisis.


Calvo, who was present for the signing, says the monuments executive order will help eliminate policies that are hurting Guam and the CNMI. The executive order does not change the designation for any of the nation's monuments but it gives a 45-day window for the Department of Interior to review with states and territories their wishes for potential reforms for these federally protected areas.

"This focuses on giving some flexibility on some of the restrictions that have been placed by the Obama Administration, in particular to the monuments. Of course in our part of the world it's the Marianas monument. So with President Trump, with the signing of this executive order, it allows for the Secretary of the Interior to work with the jurisdictions. For us it's Guam and the Northern Marianas, to work out a kind of an arrangement on the uses of the monuments," explained Calvo.

But perhaps the more pressing issue the governor had the opportunity to discuss with other federal officials is the territory's foreign labor crisis.

"I had an opportunity to meet with Deputy Secretary [Robert] Work and give an update on the issues regarding our crisis which is the H2B problem as well," noted the governor.

The island has reached a critical point with absolutely no H2B approvals since last year and only 139 H2B workers left on island. With a military buildup looming and the cost of construction rising, the governor said he emphasized to Washington officials the importance of the H2B program not just for the Guam economy

but for the ~~governor's confidence and~~  (/) (<http://www.pacificnewscenter.com/livestream>)

~~"Of course he did not realize the magnitude of the problem where it's now we're looking at 139 workers by the end of the week that are H2B. The reality of the crisis is that housing is the grassroots economic crisis. When you talk about housing crisis, you're talking about the grassroots being affected and of course this will sooner or later spread to the military," said Calvo.~~

The governor's dialogue with Deputy Secretary Work is timely. The issue was also the subject of a meeting at the Guam Chamber of Commerce yesterday in which Immigration Lawyer Melinda Swavely provided an update on a lawsuit against the federal government by the Guam Contractors Association.

"I also tried to explain to the deputy secretary my reasons as to why I'm against the buildup at this point," added the governor. "I'm trying to go to the top of the highest mountain or tree and shake as much branches or yell as loud as I can so someone can finally make some changes from the current direction we're going."

The governor says that the discussion with Deputy Secretary Work was positive and Work who assured him that he would bring up the matter with his counterpart at the Department of Homeland Security.

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