

FILED
Clerk
District Court
SEP 22 2026

for the Northern Mariana Islands
By 
(Deputy Clerk)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

BETTY JOHNSON, on behalf of herself,
and as a representative of a class of
similarly-situated persons,

Plaintiff,

v.

DAVID M. APATANG, Governor of the
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana
Islands (“Government”), *et al.*,

Defendants.

CIVIL CASE NO. 09-00023

ORDER

Post-September 15, 2026 Status Hearing

This case came before the court for a status hearing on September 15, 2026, at which time the appointed NMI Settlement Fund Trustee Joyce C.H. Tang presented an update on the status of the Settlement Fund. Based on her Report of the Trustee for Combined Second Quarter FY 2026 through Fourth Quarter FY 2026 (ECF No. 903), filed on September 11, 2026, the court orders as follows:

Budget. The Trustee’s proposed FY 2027 budget is set forth in Exhibit 5 of the Report. While the FY 2027 budget is 2.57% more than the FY 2026 budget, this increase reflects repair and maintenance expenses resulting from Super typhoon Sinlaku and refunds to inactive members. Settlement Fund operations consistently remain low, and the court finds the proposed budget to be reasonable and accordingly approves said budget.

Approval of Hearing Officers and Arbitrator. On May 27, 2026, the Trustee filed a Request for Approval of Hearing Officers and Arbitrator (ECF No. 899). Consistent with Rule 2(c) and (e) of the NMI Settlement Fund Appeal Rules and Procedures, and Section 10.0(k) of the Settlement Agreement (ECF No. 468-1), the court hereby approves the Trustee's selection of attorney Heather Martinez Quitugua as hearing officer and Vanessa Williams Cruz as conflicts hearing officer and arbitrator, replacing attorneys Deborah Fisher and Richard Johnson, respectively.

Extended Settlement Repayment Periods. The Trustee reported on the cases requiring court approval and filed the Request for Approval of Settlement Repayment Periods (the "Request") on September 17, 2026. *See* ECF No. 908. The Trustee stated that court approval was necessary for the six settled cases listed in Exhibit A to the Request (ECF No. 908-1) because the repayment terms exceed the two-year limitation set forth in 1 N. MAR. I. CODE § 8390(b). Based on the Trustee's representations that the financial circumstances of the six members warranted extending the repayment periods, the court grants the Request and orders that the repayment periods be extended as reflected in Exhibit A.

IT IS SO ORDERED.



/s/ **Frances M. Tydingco-Gatewood**
Designated Judge
Dated: Sep 22, 2026