

## **FSM Information Services**

### **Press Release**

#### **Citing COVID-19 Exposure, FSM Consulate in Guam Moves to Remote Work Only**

HARMON, Guam—On September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Consulate of the Federated States of Micronesia in the U.S. Territory of Guam announced that, despite the Government of Guam’s recent laxation on some components of its lockdown, it will be moving towards providing all citizen services remotely.

The Honorable Teresa Filepin, Consul General of the FSM to Guam, requested permission from the FSM Department of Foreign Affairs for the closure of in-person services due to multiple direct contacts with COVID-19 infected individuals and/or their immediate family members who reside with them.

Even when the Government instituted a total lockdown, the Consulate continued to provide citizens with crucial assistance ranging from passport applications to inquiries regarding FSM financial assistance. Other services, such as certificates of identity, notary public, public unemployment assistance, delivery of supplies, mails, payments, ground arrangements for repatriation, and assistance to Members of Congress for their attendance in Congressional Sessions, were ongoing.

“Although our main service windows were closed to the general public since the first week of lockdown,” Consul General Filepin said, “In practice we were still assisting on average 25 visitors a day through our back and side doors.”

The Consulate advised that, on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, a minimum of four (4) individuals, either with a confirmed case of COVID-19, and/or a direct household member of an individual with COVID-19, interacted with Consulate staff.

“I cannot, in good conscience, continue to subject my staff to this type of hazardous environment,” the Consul General said. “We will divert calls to our mobile phones again and work remotely from home.”

His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the FSM, praised Consul General Filepin and her staff for their continued support to the stranded citizens in Guam, in addition to ongoing services to

the FSM community at large. “I thoroughly endorse the Consul General’s request to shutdown the Consulate until such a time that it can be confirmed that the Consulate is clean from COVID-19, and that all staff have been tested for the virus. I appreciate that the decision to close down the Consulate at this time will not be popular with our citizens abroad, but I trust everyone will understand that the decision is predicated on the need to keep our citizens safe from the virus.”