

A black and white portrait of Governor Felix P. Camacho, smiling and wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a dark tie with small white dots. The portrait is positioned on the left side of the page.

State of the Island Address

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2006
10:00 A.M.
LEGISLATIVE SESSION HALL

GOVERNOR
FELIX P. CAMACHO



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Felix Perez Camacho
Governor

Kaleo Scott Moylan
Lieutenant Governor

Office of the Speaker

MARK FORBES

Date: 2/22/04

Time: 11:13am

Rec'd by: ESP

Print Name: ESP

Hafa Adai my dear people of Guam.

The state of our island is growing stronger every day! People are optimistic and our quality of life has improved. We are better off now than we were three short years ago.

Good morning Lt. Governor Moylan, Speaker Forbes, Chief Justice Carbullido; Delegate Bordallo; former governors; members of the Consular Corps; Senators; Archbishop Anthony Apuron and members of the clergy; Justice and Judges; Mayors; members of the Military, my wife First Lady Joann Camacho, my mother Former First Lady Lourdes Camacho, distinguished guests... my fellow citizens of Guam.

I want to take a moment to thank our sons and daughters from Guam serving in the Armed forces. As we gather here today – under the flag of our island and our nation – our brave men and women are in foreign lands protecting the very freedom that allows us to be here today. But the price our people have paid is overwhelming. Seven young men from Guam have lost their lives in the war. I ask that we take a moment of silence to honor their memories.....

[MOMENT OF SILENCE]

Thank you.

In the year 2003, we were brought together at a time when *our people*, our island and our government needed healing from natural destruction, an ailing economy and years of mistrust and abuse in government.

We had a clear mission... to set things right ... recover from the devastating storms..... stabilize and strengthen our economy... restore trust in our government... and reunite our people.

Over these past three years, enormous energies have been and continue to be expended by many men and women to get us out of the trouble our island was in... to clean up the mess we were left. The skill, perseverance, intelligence and devotion of the people of Guam are amazing.

Together, we rebuilt schools... we cleaned our island... we restored jobs and brought this government back from the verge of collapse.

We did this together because we all had a stake in recovering our great island and bringing about the real change needed for all of us to believe again.

While we still have more work to do –our mission is well on its way to being accomplished.

Three years later you only need to look around to see the real progress that has been made in our economy.....

Together, we added three thousand-seven-hundred private sector jobs for our people. We dropped unemployment by a third over the last three years and our people are back to work!

Today, more tourists are visiting our island – 1.2 million last year alone – a number we haven't seen since the year 2000. And we expect that number to grow, creating even more jobs and circulating more money into our economy.

The airport is investing more than 120-million dollars to meet these greater demands and provide increased services to you.

Our tourism partners recognize our great potential and are already investing hundreds of millions of dollars to renovate hotels and expand stores to better serve our residents and visitors alike.

But the promise of a bright economic future won't just rest on tourism. We've seen it before, and we're bringing it back.

We are seeing the return to the days when tourism and the military – together – brought prosperity to our island. A military that was downsizing a few short years ago is now set to bring about the greatest economic boom our island has yet seen.

Three submarines have already been home-ported in Apra Harbor. Pacific Air Forces has committed to basing a Global Strike Task Force at Andersen Air Force Base. Efforts are already underway to relocate up to seven thousand Marines on Guam. And this is just the beginning.

Over the next several years, we will see billions of dollars in investments by our military partners to prepare for an influx of more than 15,000 military personnel and their families who will be stationed here on Guam. This activity will bring increased investment, more businesses and better jobs for our people.

But the military expansion will not come at the cost of our people. We are working to ensure that this major growth is matched by improvements to promote and enhance the quality of life for our people.

We are upgrading our water and wastewater systems, infusing 108 million dollars to properly dispose of wastewater and to deliver clean water to your homes, our schools, and our businesses.

We are improving our power system to meet the future demands of a busy, growing island. Millions have already been spent to place parts of the power system underground, and we will continue this effort to bring you better services.

You'll have to pardon our progress as the Department of Public Works begins eighty-six million dollars in road repairs and expansions. In total, we will make much needed upgrades to more than 280 village roads and more than 20 major roadways.

We are not just improving our roads – we are cleaning them. Together with you, your mayors and vice mayors we have launched a program to remove more than six thousand abandoned vehicles and appliances from your neighborhoods.

We've built new Senior Citizen centers in Agat, Santa Rita and Malessos and refurbished others in Sinajana and Agana Heights because respect for our Man' Amko is reflected in the things we do and not just in the things we say.

Soon veterans from wars past -- and soldiers who are now returning -- will find help at a new Veteran's Affairs office in Asan.

And for those of you who don't own a home... we're finding ways to help you build your dreams. For the first time ever, we've opened up opportunities to build or improve your home on Chamorro Land Trust land and Land for the Landless property through partnerships between USDA and Guam Housing.

From individual homes to large scale military projects, billions of dollars will be poured into our economy, bringing great improvements to our island.

And the opportunities don't stop there. We continue to return lands to original land owners and their descendants, bringing closure to a long-standing issue and a promising new future for their children and grandchildren.

Tiyan land is significant both economically and culturally. Embroiled in turmoil, it can be a bridge between our people and the federal government or a chasm that will only cause division and strife. Taken by force by the invading Imperial Japanese army, liberated and utilized by the US military, returned to the government of Guam and given back to the original land owners – it has now become the focal point – where one federal agency has challenged this government to use it... by saying *"Give us what we want, when we*

want it... on our terms, or lose the land forever because we'll take it back." How can they take back what was never truly theirs?

This generation of federal authorities fails to recognize the many sacrifices and suffering that occurred on this land by our people and their families. Tomorrow, I leave for Washington D.C. to remind them of those sacrifices and to defend the rights of our landowners and the actions of this government.

As we look to the future, nothing is more important than the education of our children.

You joined us in our mission to place your children and our schools first... not by words, but through brush, broom and paint. We called on Guam's people to help repair each and every school... and you responded by volunteering with Adopt A School and Project ABC to open our classrooms on time and to give your children schools they could be proud of.

We made emergency repairs, fixed hundreds of classrooms and air-conditioners... cleared land and debris and painted schools. People from all walks of life joined this effort... And this summer?... We're going to do it again!

Together, we have laid the strong foundation for education to remain the first priority of our community. Already, we've changed the conversation in our schools... from broken air-cons to curriculum... from a lack of textbooks to higher test scores. Teachers are talking about teaching and leaders are working to support them.

We've invested fourteen million dollars to buy new textbooks, which are now in your children's classrooms ON TIME at the start of every school year.

We added sixty-nine new school buses and now one hundred and seventy buses stand ready to take your children to school safely and on time.

School cafeterias and restrooms are inspected regularly to ensure that they meet Public Health standards. And this month, the Department of Public Health inspected all 37 school cafeterias... The results? One "B" and the rest "A's".

Pre-apprenticeship programs in our high schools are giving your children the training to enter the workforce prepared with the skills they need to be competitive.

We've increased funding to the Guam Public School system ... which receives the largest portion of government revenues. And while GPSS is governed by an independent elected school board, my Administration remains committed to doing all that we can and providing every resource possible to ensure your children get the highest quality of education available.

That's why I worked with the US Department of the Interior to dedicate six-point-one million dollars of Compact Impact funds every year to build four new schools and

convert another into a much needed middle school. Yesterday, we moved one step closer as the Supreme Court of Guam heard our case to ensure we have the authority to hold future governors to our commitment to the schools that we all know are needed for our children.

Starting this summer, students will begin learning in UOG's brand new Jesus and Eugenia Leon Guerrero School of Business and Public Administration and GCC's new Multi-Purpose Auditorium and Technology Center.

These schools are more than just a 170 million dollar investment into our economy... they are an investment in the future of your children.

But our vision for education goes beyond buildings and textbooks. It defines a new course for schools that begins in the classroom and works its way out to the schools and the entire GPSS system.

We must explore a teacher pay structure that gives teachers a higher starting salary and opportunities for advancement based on outcomes and performance. We must also consider a school to life curriculum that fully prepares our high school graduates to excel in whatever they choose... whether college or work.

I want to commend Juan Flores for his leadership of the Guam Public School System – the proof is in the outcomes... and Mr. Flores' outcomes certainly speak to a school system that is well on its way to excellence!

More importantly, I want to congratulate our school children. For the second consecutive year, they raised their national test scores. They are clearly on their way to achieving excellence.

We have come a long way from the restoration of schools to increased student achievement. It took focus, commitment and the efforts of many people. And it is beginning to pay off. We are addressing the same challenges with a healthcare system that struggles to meet the growing demands of our island's health needs.

We've taken health care from tents in the hospital's parking lot after the typhoon to reopened wards at GMH. By increasing funding to our Hospital, we've been able to provide more medicines and pharmaceutical supplies and equipment.

Our hospital will soon have a new C-T scan, newborn respiratory machines, fetal monitors and critical operating room equipment.

We are hiring more nurses and exploring ways to address discrepancies in the pay structure for health professionals. This will help increase our ability to recruit and retain them.

And our education and labor agencies have teamed up through the Passport to Careers Program, giving high school students an early start on work-based learning for allied health and nursing.... moving them immediately from high school... to college and then into the work place. GCC's new LPN nursing program allows nursing students to gain practical experience at our public health centers and the hospital while still in school.

We are renovating the Northern Public Health Center to provide greater access to care for our un-insured and under-insured residents.

We've also increased Temporary Assistance to Needy Families by 50-percent – lessening their burden at a time when they are struggling the most.

We see a healthier future for our children.... That's why we are increasing our prevention efforts at public health... to reduce the cases of heart disease, diabetes and other chronic conditions that affect so many of our loved ones. Soon we will be testing their body mass index in the schools to help them choose healthier life styles.

Our goal is to move from acute care to preventive care so that your tax dollars can go to raising a healthy community instead of simply treating preventable diseases.

Our commitment to the people of Guam continues with our efforts to protect you and your families in times of emergency.

When I came into office we had only three unreliable ambulances serving our entire island. Today -- there are 12 ambulances on our roads -- responding quicker and with better tools to give your loved ones a better chance at recovery.

We have also purchased five new fire trucks and are building a new fire and police station in Dededo to serve your needs.

To boost our police presence and deter crime in your community, we have hired 75 more police officers and purchased nearly 100 new police cars. Even our private sector partners have pitched in to help make your community safer.... Donating their time and even more importantly ... additional safety vehicles to assist your law enforcement officers.

And to protect our children, we now have an Amber Alert Program ... that brings our community together with law enforcement to search for a missing child.

Today more Customs officers and canine patrols guard our borders to intercept those who would profit from illegal drug use ... seizing millions in narcotics and stopping them from hitting our streets and our families. We've shut down illegal ice labs... handing over those responsible for this deadly activity to the criminal justice system.

All of these officers .. whether GPD, Airport or Port Police... take an oath to protect you. Our vision is to merge our law enforcement agencies into one department ... erasing any

jurisdictional borders that may exist. Soon... they will all respond to your calls..... faster than ever before and with more support and equipment to keep you from harms way.

We already started to make this vision a reality when we submitted our reorganization plan to the Guam Legislature. And while some continue to talk about saving money - our focus is on saving and protecting lives.

Our commitment to public safety, health, education and the economy is reflected in my 2007 budget submission. This budget indicates the growth in visitor arrivals, military build-up, real estate transactions, investments, construction and more. However, this must be balanced with our inherited debt.

Somewhere along the line, in the past decade, many things went wrong in the government of Guam. Our debt increased in tax refunds to the people and businesses; Retirement contributions were not made; EITC was ignored; utility payments for power and street lights were unpaid and vendor payments were not honored.

We must now deal with this mounting debt. It must be paid... but we remain paralyzed, unable to act, due to lawsuits and appeals brought against this government.

Public law approved by many of the current senators already authorizes us to borrow more than 400-million dollars to pay off our liability. And in the coming months, we will continue our discussions on exactly how much debt we need to refinance in order to put our government on the right track.

Since I entered office we have cut government spending. We have reduced the number of employees. And we continue to deliver and expand our services to you.

We can no longer put off the only viable solution until a future time for the sake of politics. We must not be paralyzed or unwilling to do anything.

As your Governor I say this: We have borrowed from you – the people of Guam - for far too long and it's time to pay you back.

Over these past three years, we have faced many challenges in our journey together and no doubt we will face many more. But we must never forget the many successes that we achieved as a community united.

I am always honored to come before you to share with you the promise of our bright new future and to celebrate the great accomplishments we achieved together. And I thank you for proving to me what I always knew in my heart that good people seeking to do the right thing can reach great new heights. We are a good people... and together, we chose to do the right thing.

On September 15th of 2004 the people of Guam lost a great leader.... A visionary for our island. Edward M. Calvo was a man of many accomplishments... as a Senator... a business man ... a loving husband and father. In his final hours there were so many things he could have reflected on But for Eddie Calvo it simply came down to this: ***Guam is Good.***

He was right. Guam *is* good. We are a giving people.... who, when called to sacrifice... answered this call to duty with strength, perseverance and courage.... The qualities that have shaped the character of our people. You answered this call three years ago and have set the course for this amazing transformation of our island ... our home.

Today, we are beginning to reap the rewards of our hard work and that shared sacrifice. Schools, roads, power, water, jobs, student achievement... and so many of the things that we set out to fix and made better in the process. The status quo is no longer acceptable. Our people expect and demand a greater quality of life.

Today we can look back at our accomplishments and be proud that we have been truly blessed by God, who gave us the opportunity to shape our future.

We are a strong people... tested and proven in every challenge set before us... shaped and guided by the values our parents taught us... but... in this time... our time... we are defining and achieving a future of our choosing.

We have an opportunity... now... to build our future on a foundation of hard work, integrity and perseverance. And we know that future will be laid on a firm foundation.

We started this journey three years ago filled with the hope of restoring our island. But more importantly, with the hope of restoring government values that reflect those of our people... trust, honesty, and integrity. And we've done it.

We must continue to set things right. We must do the right thing. And we must move forward with our progress.

As we look to the future... with a renewed sense of confidence and optimism ... we must... we will finish strong! We know we will ***Guam is good.***

We have seen God's favor and blessing over this island and her people and for that – I give thanks. May God Bless you and your families and May He Continue to Bless our Nation and our island of Guam.