



COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

**Benigno R. Fitial**  
Governor

**Timothy P. Villagomez**  
Lieutenant Governor

MAY 02 2008

The Honorable Arnold I. Palacios  
Speaker, House of Representatives  
Sixteenth Northern Marianas  
Commonwealth Legislature  
Saipan, MP 96950

The Honorable Pete P. Reyes  
Senate President  
Sixteenth Northern Marianas  
Commonwealth Legislature  
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. Speaker and Mr. President:

This is to inform you that I have signed into law House Bill 16-55 entitled, "To amend 9 CMC §2201; and for other purposes," which was passed by the Sixteenth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

I agree with the findings of the Legislature that due to the nature of the offense, driving without immediate possession of a valid license should be a civil offense instead of a misdemeanor. I am aware that offenders end up with a criminal record, which can be considered a heavy punishment since the offense lacks a victim. I appreciate that by turning this crime into a civil offense, the government will save money from having to appoint attorneys to represent indigent offenders.

This bill becomes **Public Law No. 16-1**. Copies bearing my signature are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benigno R. Fitial".

BENIGNO R. FITIAL

**CC:** Lt. Governor  
Special Legal Counsels, Office of the Governor  
Legal Counsel, Office of the Lt. Governor  
Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General  
Chief Justice, CNMI Supreme Court  
Presiding Judge, CNMI Superior Court  
Special Assistant to the Administration  
All Departments and Agencies  
Special Assistant for Programs & Legislative Review



*House of Representatives*  
NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE  
P.O. BOX 500586  
SAIPAN, MP 96950

March 31, 2008

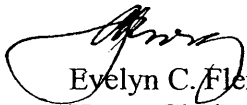
**PUBLIC LAW NO. 16-1**

The Honorable Benigno R. Fitial  
Governor  
Commonwealth of the Northern  
Mariana Islands  
Capitol Hill  
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Governor Fitial:

I have the honor of transmitting herewith for your action **House Bill No. 16-55**, entitled: "To amend 9 CMC § 2201, and for other purposes." which was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Sixteenth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

Sincerely yours,

  
Eyelyn C. Fleming  
House Clerk

Attachment



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**SIXTEENTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE**  
FIRST REGULAR SESSION, 2008

**PUBLIC LAW NO. 16-1**  
**House Bill No. 16-55**

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**AN ACT**

To amend 9 CMC § 2201, and for other purposes.

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**In the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Offered by Representative:** Rosemond B. Santos

**Date:** March 12, 2008

Referred to: None  
Public Hearing: None  
Standing Committee Report: None

**Passed First and Final Reading on March 12, 2008**

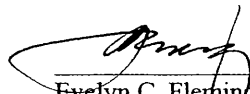
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**In the SENATE**

Referred to: None  
Public Hearing: None  
Standing Committee Report: None

**Passed Final Reading on March 19, 2008**

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Evelyn C. Fleming, House Clerk



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
SIXTEENTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE  
FIRST REGULAR SESSION, 2008

PUBLIC LAW NO. 16-1  
H. B. NO. 16-55

AN ACT

TO AMEND 9 CMC § 2201, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE SIXTEENTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH  
LEGISLATURE:

1           **Section 1. Findings and purpose.** The Commonwealth Legislature finds that  
2 violation of 9 CMC § 2201(c) should be a civil offense rather than a misdemeanor due to the  
3 nature of the offense, the lack of a victim, and the current cost to the court system in  
4 appointing attorneys to represent persons charged under the section.

5           **Section 2. Amendment.** Title 9, Section 2201 is amended as follows:

6           **“§ 2201. Operator’s License.**

7                   (a) No person, other than those expressly exempted in this division, shall  
8 operate any motor vehicle upon a highway in the Commonwealth unless that person  
9 has been licensed as an operator under this division.

10                   (b) A fee of fifteen dollars (\$15) shall be paid to the Director of the  
11 Department of Finance for each operator’s license issued. A fee of five dollars (\$5)  
12 shall be paid to the Director of the Department of Finance for each duplicate or  
13 substitute license issued.

14                   (c) No person shall operate any motor vehicle upon a highway in the  
15 Commonwealth without having on his person or in his immediate possession a valid  
16 license issued by the Bureau or a valid operator’s license from outside the  
17 Commonwealth, provided there is compliance with 9 CMC § 2202.

18                   (d) A violation of subsections (a) of this section shall be punishable by not  
19 more than six (6) months imprisonment, or a fine of not more than five hundred  
20 dollars (\$500), or both.

1 (e) A violation of subsection (c) of this section shall be a civil infraction  
2 punishable by a fine of not more than fifty dollars (\$50) for the first offense and not  
3 more than one hundred dollars (\$100) for any second or subsequent offense. Any  
4 person assessed a civil fine under this subsection may, in lieu of appearing in court,  
5 pay the fine to the Clerk of Court prior to the court appearance date.”

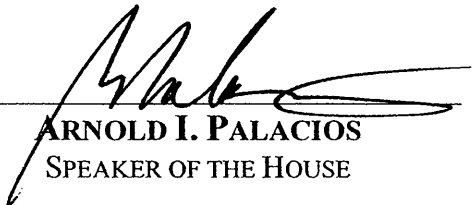
6 **Section 3. Severability.** If any provision of this Act or the application of any such  
7 provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent  
8 jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or  
9 circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.

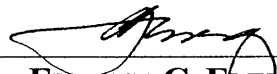
10 **Section 4. Savings clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not be  
11 construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under statutes  
12 repealed or under any rule, regulation or order adopted under the statutes. Repealers  
13 contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under or pursuant to prior law.  
14 The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of terminating, or in any way modifying,  
15 any liability, civil or criminal, which shall already be in existence on the date this Act  
16 becomes effective.

17 **Section 5. Effective date.** This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the  
18 Governor or becoming law without such approval.

CERTIFIED BY:

ATTESTED TO BY:

  
ARNOLD I. PALACIOS  
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

  
EVELYN C. FLEMING  
HOUSE CLERK

APPROVED on this 2nd day of MAY, 2008

  
BENIGNO R. FITIAL  
GOVERNOR

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS