

## Legislatures organization brings islands together

APIL and its related agencies have a mandate for reform and restructuring coming out of their two-day meeting in Majuro last week.

Association of Pacific Island Legislatures President J. Kalani English, a state senator in Hawaii, told the Journal that APIL is shifting to focus on “how to deliver goods and services to the region.”

Plans in motion call not only for restructuring the way meetings are conducted, but also restructuring of the Pacific Islands Development Bank to fit the changing times, English said.

“Members need more informal discussion time to get into in-depth discussions,” he said. “There’s a need to restructure. The organization has reached a level of maturity. It’s grown and needs to adjust.”

English, who has just taken over as APIL’s new President for 2009, said: “I want to make the organization more user-friendly to members, with less formality so members have more time to talk among each other.”

English said that much can be accomplished through APIL and its regional financial organization, the Pacific Islands Development Bank. PIDB provides loans in the islands that have contributed capital of \$1 million. The RMI is currently reviewing an investment.

Other islands have invested in smaller amounts building up to the \$1 million target, said Aron Palik, President of PIDB, who was in Majuro for last week’s meetings. To date, Guam, Palau, Yap, the Northern Marianas and Pohnpei have each put in \$1 million. Kosrae has invested \$600,000 and Chuuk \$251,000, despite economic problems in both of these FSM states.

English praised the low default rate of less than one percent, crediting Palik’s hands-on work and follow up with loan recipients to ensure success. The focus of bank lending at the moment is largely on business and development projects, though Palik said this may expand in the future.

English said that APIL is looking to “grow partnerships” with other groups such as the United Nations Development Program, AusAID and the Republic of China.

“The message coming out of the Majuro meeting is we want to deliver tangible benefits to the members,” English said.

The next annual general assembly is set for Pohnpei in late May or early June, while the next board meeting in late 2009 will be held in Kiribati.

English also said he was delighted RMI had returned to membership after years of absence.

# APIL position is to ‘deliver goods’



RMI Chief Justice Daniel Cadra (seated) swore in the new APIL officers last week. From left: Nitijela Speaker Jurelang Zedkaia, President Kalani English, Treasurer Alik Alik and Secretary Judith Won Pat. Photo: Douglas Henry

## Senator English pushes new plans

APIL President J. Kalani English is determined to see this regional organization move to the next level of accomplishment. “We’ve discussed the issues,” the Hawaii state senator told the Journal. “People understand the needs. Now it’s time to move to implementation.”

APIL is not without its own set of tools, including the Pacific Islands Development Bank that was established by the organization and is capitalized by a \$1 million investment from member islands that want to get bank investment in their islands.

English pointed out that PIDB is one of a number of tools that APIL brings to the table to promote its agenda and move forward to address key issues in the region.

## RMI welcomed back to group

The Association of Pacific Island Legislatures held its 49<sup>th</sup> board meeting on Thursday and Friday last week, following a swearing in of its officers by RMI Supreme Court Chief Justice Daniel Cadra at the Nitijela.

In a brief opening ceremony, Speaker Iroj Jurelang said it gave him pleasure to have the Nitijela resume membership in APIL.

He pointed to the APIL-established Pacific Islands Development Bank as a vehicle to support development in the member islands,

providing loans, technical assistance and other programs. Incoming APIL President J. Kalani English, a state senator from Hawaii, said the body had “missed the presence of the Marshall Islands” and was happy to see RMI rejoin.

“We look for meaningful participation of the Marshall Islands and welcome it back to membership,” English said.

APIL has 12 member islands — the four states of the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, RMI, Guam, the Northern Mariana

Islands, American Samoa, Hawaii and two non-US affiliated islands, Nauru and Kiribati.

English pointed out that APIL membership cuts across all political jurisdictions — freely associated states, commonwealths and territories of the US, a state and independent nations not associated with the US. The agenda included what he described as “very pressing issues,” ranging from environment and health to economic development and the social well being of the populations in the islands.



Joining in opening the APIL meeting last week was (top photo) President Litokwa Tomeing, Speaker Jurelang Zedkaia, Iroj Kotak Loek, APIL President Kalani English and Rev. Enja Enos; Senator English greets Taiwan Ambassador Bruce JD Linghu; Nitijela Vice Speaker Alik Alik is sworn in by Chief Justice Cadra. Photos: Douglas Henry and Giff Johnson.