

# Senate visits Southwest States



Briefing aboard MV Atoll Way during its trip

Setting sail on board the MV Atoll Way, the Senate oversight committee left on Koror on Monday morning, June 12, 2000 at 10:30 a.m. on its way to visit the Southwest Islands State of Sonsorol and Hatohebei to inspect CIP projects on these islands. Senators making the trip were Senators Johnny Reklai, Sandra Pierantozzi, Lucius Malsol and Sam Masang, accompanied by Delegates Thomas Patris and Lucio Ngrawet.

Since 1993, the OEK has appropriate over \$5 million worth of public funds to these two island states. "It is prudent, therefore, for the OEK to inspect states projects to find out if the public funds expended have been used for their proper purposes," said senator Pierantozzi, Floor Leader of the Senate and Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Health.

When the Fifth OEK took office in the 1997, the Senate took the initiative of traveling all over Palau to inspect CIP projects that were funded since 1993 and issued comprehensive report on its finding in a publication called *Does the OEK know where it's funds are going?* In 1998, due to the hosting of the Micro Games in Palau then, there was no CIP inspection trip that year. In 1999, a second inspection trip was again taken through-

out the states of Palau and a follow-up was issued entitled *Where are we regarding OEK appropriations?* It was not possible during those two years for the Senate to make field trips to the Southwest Islands States. However, this year, the Senate chartered the MV Atoll Way and conducted this oversight trip. Forty-seven people started out on this trip with 57 returning to Koror as some passengers were picked up from the island.

Other agencies joined the trip and included staff from EQPB who inspected and tested water supplies at the islands, Palau Parent Network who made contacts and assessments of disabled children, Sanitation who

made surveys on rat infestation and distributed traps and seedlings of "rechesengel" and trained local residents on the use of this plants to kill rats, CIP office who inspected projects constructed on the islands, Behavioral Health who contracted mentally ill patients on the islands, and others.

Due to the distances between the islands, the group sailed mostly at nights and made landing on each island during the day time to conduct their activities. Most stops at each island were about four hours' duration, with briefings conducted at night while on board the ship. Also accompanying the OEK delegation were chief executive officials of the two states and other residents.

Islands visited include Sonsorol, Pulo Anna, Tobi, Helen's Reef, and Merir. The delegation was also able to inspect solar panels already installed on Sonsorol by private contractors as well as the other OEK funded projects. The solar system for these islands were funded by OEK appropriations from the Energy Fund under the COFA funding.

A full report is being prepared by the OEK staff and will be published shortly. The MV Atoll Way is owned by Hatohebei State and was purchased by OEK appropriations. The Senate chartered the ships for \$5,000 for the entire trip.