

Chairman Barker, members of the committee,
thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of HB 2517.

HB 2517 adds no new privileges or rights to members of the island nations of The Republic of Palau, The Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia that they didn't already have before 2009. It simply restores their ability to obtain a "regular" 8 year Oregon driver's license – a privilege to which they should be entitled under Oregon law and a U.S. Treaty known as the Compact of Free Association.

It is particularly important to consider the historical and international context that surrounds this bill. As you know, some of those islands served as testing grounds for U.S. nuclear weapons tests from 1946 until 1958. There were 67 tests in all. The largest was a 15 megaton device – equivalent to 1,000 bombs the size of the one dropped on Hiroshima. This testing represented 80% of all U.S. atmospheric testing – the consequences of which still impact islanders three generations later with some of the highest per capita birth defects and cancers in the world.

In addition, these islands were (and are) militarily important to us because of their strategic location in the mid-Pacific. Evidence of that is Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands which continues to serve as a U.S. military base for over 1,000 personnel.

The COFA agreements, which were negotiated as part of these islands gaining sovereignty in the 1980's, reflect our continued obligation and indebtedness to these people who have sacrificed so much for our defense and national security. No other nations' citizens are allowed the travel and work privileges given Free Association State (FAS) citizens. Under COFA, FAS citizens can travel, reside, and work unrestricted with regards to length of stay in the United States. All that is required of them is an I 94 form and a valid passport.

The Federal Real ID Act of 2005 has caused much confusion among the states. When the Oregon DMV changed its licensing procedures in 2009 in an attempt to comply with the act, it made no distinction between FAS citizens and other nation aliens. The result is that even though many islanders have resided and worked in Oregon for years, some for more than twenty years, they are now permitted only "temporary" licenses which must be renewed annually at a cost of \$25 – as opposed to an 8 year "regular" license costing the equivalent of \$7.50 per year for everyone else.

While the Real I.D. Act is intended to compel states to use better proof of identity documents such as birth certificates, passports etc. in issuing licenses, it does not mandate states to issue different classes of licenses. In fact, H.R. 418 which created the "Real I.D. Act" makes no reference to "limited term" or "temporary" licenses. Thus with proper identification and proof of residency, Washington and Idaho issue regular licenses to FAS residents. Our neighbor to the south, California, appears to use a "limited term for legal presence" license that may be a shorter term than a regular license but which can still be extended at no additional cost to the applicant. Even Texas, which initially issued only one year temporary licenses such as Oregon, now provides FAS residents regular 6 year license privileges.

I urge you to support HB 2517 and to restore regular license status privileges to our Free Association State residents of Oregon. They are hard working people who contribute greatly to our state and do not deserve to be treated as second class citizens.

Thank you.

Wayne Baum, Salem, OR.