

Fiscal: No Fiscal Impact

Revenue: No Revenue Impact

Action Date: 06/04/15

Action: Be Adopted.

Meeting Dates: 06/04

Vote:

Yeas: 4 - Boquist, Burdick, Ferrioli, Rosenbaum

Exc: 1 - Beyer

Prepared By: Erin Seiler, Committee Administrator

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Expresses support for and gratitude to citizens of Compact of Free Association nations residing in United States.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Contributions of citizens for COFA nations
- Long term impact of nuclear weapons testing on nations
- Utilization of COFA nations for strategic military purposes
- Ability of COFA nation citizens to access resources in the United States

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Shortly after World War II, the United States (US) assumed administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands under a United Nations (UN) strategic trusteeship that provided for US control over development of the islands' economies and international relations and for US military access to territory within the islands. The US was allowed by the UN to treat the Pacific Islands as a strategic trust territory, and the US Atomic Energy Commission established the Pacific Proving Grounds in the Marshall Islands, where 67 atmospheric nuclear weapons were tested between 1946 and 1958.

The area formerly known as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands now includes three groups of islands that became the independent sovereign nations of the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia and are known as the Compact of Free Association (COFA) islands. As a result of the unique relationship that has existed between the COFA nations and the US, the COFA treaties allow island citizens to enter the US without visas to study, live and work and to have access to available services such as driver licenses and health care. Since the COFA treaties came into effect, citizens of the COFA islands have moved to the US for education and work opportunities because island economies have made it difficult for residents to find jobs or to obtain a good education. COFA island citizens volunteer to serve in the US Armed Forces at a higher per capita rate than US citizens.

Eastern Oregon University has had a program for students from the Federated States of Micronesia since 1977 that provides services to COFA students in recognition of the challenges these students will face in achieving their academic goals and in their everyday lives in the US.

House Concurrent Resolution 21 supports the rights of COFA islanders residing in Oregon to live freely among us and expresses deep appreciation for their extraordinary commitment to the service and defense of our nation.