

HB 2594

COFA citizens eligible for law enforcement employment.

Under current Oregon law, it is required for all law enforcement personnel in Oregon to be United States Citizens. (ORS 181A.055, 181A.490, 181A.520, 181A.530 along with corresponding administrative rules and certification requirements).

There are currently many citizens from the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands residing in Oregon. These three independent nations have a unique treaty relationship with the United States, a Compact of Free Association (COFA). The Compact of Free Association allows the citizens of these three countries many liberties in the United States concerning education, immigration, and military service. As such they are often referred to as COFA countries because of their shared and unique treaty relationship.

Many COFA community members are also military veterans. If the COFA countries were a state, they would have more residents, as a percentage of their population, joining the armed forces than any other state in the Union, demonstrating their loyalty even if they do not eventually become United States citizens.

It was discovered that even though non-US citizens may not become law enforcement officers, there is nothing in Federal or State law prohibiting the State of Oregon from making an exception for communities like Oregon's COFA residents.

HB2594 will allow Oregon's COFA residents to apply for law enforcement employment in Oregon without surrendering citizenship in their country of birth.

HB2594 is a Win – Win in all respects. It opens up an employment opportunity for our COFA community. It allows more qualified individuals to apply for law enforcement employment. It allows the COFA community in Oregon to maintain ties with their family and communities by not requiring them to surrender the citizenship nor undergo the lengthy and expensive citizenship process.

We urge your support We urge a Yes vote.

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