

HB2594 (COFA Law Enforcement Bill)

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 various 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 (collectively referred to as COFA). This Compact allows the citizens of these three countries many liberties in the United States relating to education, immigration, military service....

Many of the 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. A demonstration of their loyalty even if they do not eventually become citizens of the United States.

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.

HB 2594 will allow Oregon's COFA residents to apply for law enforcement employment without surrendering citizenship in their country of birth.

HB 2594 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.