

Testimony by Joe Enlet, Consul General, FSM Consulate General – Portland
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Oregon State Legislature, Salem, OR

Co-Chair Dembrow and Co-Chair Power, Members of the Committee, my greetings to you in my native Chuukese tongue, “Ranannim.”

I am here today to offer a Pacific Islander voice and perspective to the discussion of climate change. I grew up on a small island called Chuuk in the Federated States of Micronesia. Growing up in Chuuk my whole world was wrapped up quite literally in these small remote islands in the North central Pacific where under the coconut trees and taro patches were the place to be. It is home to over a hundred thousand people who take pride in our rich cultures and in our simple way of life. People of the Pacific are proud of their heritage of living in harmony with each other and with our environment. One of our greatest gifts to humanity is the art of ancient navigation which, had it not been for the late great Mau Piailug, would have faded into the night. It is well-documented that the great Piailug single-handedly taught the world about navigation and it is now being preserved and taught in many places beyond Micronesia. So in case some weird thing happens in the near future to our satellites and world technology shuts down, you know who to call if you want to find your way around. I hope that someday and somehow the many documentaries and Hollywood films would give credit where it is due... just in case any Hollywood film producers or Dwayne the Rock Johnson is observing our hearing today.

The changes in our climate such as the increased frequency of typhoons and floods, the erosion of our coastal lands, and the change in the yield of our natural sources of food is undeniable. Like other Pacific Island countries, the Federated States of Micronesia has been at the forefront of the climate change talks on the international stage trying to convince the world that climate change is a real existential threat to the livelihood of our people and culture. In 2007 former FSM president, Manny Mori, issued the 1st FSM National Climate Change Policy emphasizing mitigation and adaptation approaches as critical ways to deal with this existential threat. As you know, Micronesia’s “Exclusive Economic Zone covers the world’s major equatorial tuna migratory paths. Our islands are the natural caretakers of a significant portion of the world’s tuna stocks.”¹ With the impacts of a changing climate that world resource will increasingly be threatened. Indeed, because of the record increases in the ocean temperature coral reefs are dying and fish numbers are diminishing as well.

Finally, Micronesia continues to be a friend to world nations in the pursuit of peace and prosperity for everyone. Many of our people who carry the love of the islands in their hearts join the U.S. military and often pay the ultimate sacrifice. Micronesia remains a strategic military area for the U.S. and a friend of America. Many of our people have moved from the islands because our island resources are not as reliable as they once were. At any level of leadership, especially here in Oregon, where we have made so much progress in addressing the needs of our communities, we ask that any decisions that are made going forward would take into consideration the livelihood of all of our people both locally in the great State of Oregon and globally as in the great nation of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Thank you for the honor to be here.

¹ Federated States of Micronesia, Second National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, (Palikir, 2007), pg. 15.