

Appropriations Member Day
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Amata Radewagen Testimony

Thank you, Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Pingree, for the opportunity today to testify on the needs of American Samoa for their budget under the Interior Department and their Office of Insular Affairs.

Tuna is to American Samoa, what the potato is to Idaho and the lobster is to Maine- without them our economies and identities would be drastically reduced.

Now what would happen if the President declared that potato growing be outlawed or that lobster couldn't be caught in an area "bigger than Alaska and Colorado combined"? Because that's what the President bragged about yesterday declaring that over 777,000 acres of tuna fishing grounds be off limits for the U.S. fishing industry and that is canned at the American Samoa cannery.

In our case, 80% of our exports and port traffic revolve around the StarKist tuna operations that employ nearly 4000 people in our territory - second only to the local government as an employer. Expanding the Pacific Remote Marine Island Monument without allowing for fishing management under the Magnuson Stevens Act will devastate our economy.

So please support us by ensuring the American Samoan Economic Development Credit, also known as the section 30a tax credit provision, is extended to maintain those jobs. Please let your Ways and Means colleagues, Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Neal, know how important its renewal is to us.

To that end, I thank the subcommittee for its recent support for funds for the architectural planning and design of a hospital expansion to help improve and alleviate the poorly conditioned facilities we are struggling with. This is 60-year-old infrastructure that's endured over 300 inches of tropical annual rainfall that has left us in state of disrepair well documented by the Army corps of Engineers since 2018.

As a result of my territorial colleagues' efforts, we were able to secure additional support from the treasury dept to use American Rescue Plan funds to further improving our sole hospital's dire situation.

The American Samoan Government has signed a design contract and announced the location of a new medical facility in the village of Tafuna located in the Western District. Attached to my written testimony is information from ASG's American Rescue Plan Act Oversight Office executive director, Keith Gebauer, outlining the local and federal funds that have been allocated for this project.

While the planning and project is well underway, the primary obstacle to construction that remains is our geographic and economic isolation. Inflation disproportionately affects the Pacific region as we deal with the rising cost of imported diesel.

As such I am requesting a modest increase of \$1M to the American Samoa Government Operations account to partially offset inflation and allow ASG to move forward with their hospital improvement plans uninterrupted.

At the Pacific Islands Country Summit in September 2022, the U.S. announced the U.S. Pacific Partnership Strategy, and \$810 million in “additional expanded programs” for the region, subject to congressional approval. The federal government recognizes that investment in the Pacific is necessary to push back against adversarial forces in the region, and I thank this committee for recognizing that need for support extends to the territories.

I want to thank you again Chair and Ranking Member for your time and consideration of my request.

American Samoa Medical Facility Funding Overview

(Based on information provided by ASG ARPA Oversight Office Executive Director, Keith Gebauer)

- The American Samoa ARPA Recovery Plan (State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds) approved by Governor Lemanu P.S. Mauga allocated \$300,000,000.00 to improve the Fagalu site facility, hire new Doctors, nurses and staff and to design and construct a \$200,000,000.00 new medical facility.
- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted disparities and deficiencies of our healthcare system in American Samoa. This was exacerbated by the border closure for nearly two years. Improving medical services and access to high quality healthcare in the territory is one of the highest priorities for this administration.
- The LBJTMC management team will administer \$100,000,000.00 for the Fagalu facility improvements.
- Governor Lemanu has designated a Steering and Construction Management (SCM) Committee to administer the new medical facility budgeted at \$200,000,000.00. The SCM committee is chaired by the Department of Health Director and is made up of key stakeholders.
- The new medical facility will be located in the village of Tafuna located in the western District.
- Through the LBJ Procurement RFP process, Architects Hawaii Limited (AHL) was awarded the design contract. The architecture contract was signed in January 2023 and the firm is in its first phase and recently visited the island to connect with the territory stakeholders and begin their information gathering. They are scheduled to return on April 13, 2023, with their medical planner.
- To date, only \$129,000.00 has been paid for the new medical facility project (per the architect contract for mobilization costs). The payment process has been established to ensure work is completed as scheduled and payments made in a timely manner.
- The new medical facility is designed for a maximum 40 bed capacity but that might be modified based on the final services to be offered.
- AHL is working with ASG to modify its design format to a design/assist/build model to bring on the construction contractor earlier in the process.