

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, thank you for hosting this year's Member Day.

As the Committee considers legislative priorities for this Congress, I would like to encourage you to examine Guam's unique relationship with the federal government and ways to increase communications and consultations between our governments. Any change in political status must first come from the People of Guam via plebiscite, but there do exist opportunities to enhance communication. This year, I plan on introducing legislation that would enhance dialogue between Guam and the federal government. Given the military build-up and the "Pacific Pivot", it is critical that Guam is given a seat at the table in such decisions.

I also want to emphasize again the need to pass the Guam Excess Land Return Act, one of the first bills I introduced in Congress and will be reintroducing again later this month. This bill empowers private landowners by authorizing the return of excess Fed Lands in Guam to be transferred to the original landowners or their heirs. Given that nearly one-third of our island is currently owned by the federal government, returning our lands is critical to my constituents.

Finally, I respectfully urge the Committee to look at the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and to make commonsense reforms around management, listing, and de-listing. The ESA is designed to promote conservation and protect species at risk of extinction. Fundamentally, this is a good idea and we should work to conserve our lands, species, and waters. However, issues with federal overreach and, at times, making it nearly impossible for the public to participate have showed us that there exists room for improvement.

I encourage the committee to look towards greater involvement of State and Territorial authorities, innovative partnerships, and carveouts and exemptions for cultural practices. This is especially prominent in the Pacific Islands, where native American pacific islanders lack recognition in laws like the ESA.

[An especially egregious example of this is the proposed rule to list 10 species of giant clam, or *hima* in CHamoru, neglect and endanger traditional arts. If finalized, the rule would essentially prohibit the continuation of a carving practice older than the United States itself. Older even than Columbus's discovery of the New World. Despite unanimous concern about this from all three territorial governments and all three Members of Congress, NOAA neither rescinded the rule nor held additional in-person public hearings. Instead, local agencies did the work to make sure the people's voice was heard. Incidents like there are easily avoidable, but we must work to ensure that proper barriers and guardrails to regulatory overreach exist.]

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, thank you.