



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-5200

July 16, 2025

The Hon. Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
C/O Office of Strategic Resources, Pacific Region
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
760 Paseo Camarillo (CM 102)
Camarillo, California 93010

**RE: Commercial Leasing for Outer Continental Shelf Minerals Offshore American Samoa-
Request for Information and Interest; [Docket No. BOEM-2025-0035]**

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I support the many good things you and your team at the Dept. of Interior (DOI) and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) are doing for the country, but unfortunately, I cannot support this proposal.

To the people of American Samoa, our Samoan culture which we call "*fa'a samoa*", is so interconnected to the ocean that it is often hard to describe. We have a Samoan legend that involves a mother and daughter from another island who, facing starvation, leaped from a cliff into the ocean and were transformed into a turtle and a shark. They swam to our island of Tutuila, arriving in the village of Vaitogi, where they were welcomed and fed. In their gratitude they returned to the sea, promising to appear to bring good fortune when called by a special song. If the seas are disturbed, our song will not be heard and the mother and daughter, our "*aiga*" (our "family") will lose their way and our promise with the sea will be broken.

Hopefully, this story helps articulate a small fraction of the deep-seated connection to the ocean Samoans have in our subconscious, and why it is we have strong reservations about any disturbance of Mother Nature and the sea.

So please understand that we cannot support such endeavors, but that we do support the United States. American Samoa is often recognized by the rest of the country for our exemplary service in the Armed Forces, and we often lead the nation in per capita enlistment. We understand the national and energy security risks and needs of the country, and that we may have to sacrifice once again, but the people of American Samoa still desire their concerns about this proposal to be addressed.

Despite advancements, I do not believe that current scraping or vacuuming technology is to the point where this project can proceed without an undue disturbance to the local ecosystem. Such activity has the potential to damage the habitats for commercially and recreationally important fish, and numerous other species. There is also the question of economic development for the territory if such projects were to proceed on our doorstep. How will this benefit and sustain the Samoan people and preserve its thousands of years culture in the process? We are simply not at a stage where the people of American Samoa can accept this proposal so close to our island.

On June 13th, I convened with the territory's leaders including the Governor, our Senate President, and the Speaker of the House to express the will of the people and the protection of American Samoa's natural resources. American Samoa and its leaders, including myself strongly affirm the importance of environmental stewardship and the need to include public trust and long-term wellbeing in all discussions relating to potential seabed activity. A sentiment exemplified in the territory's Executive Order 0006-2024, which implements a moratorium on deep seabed mining exploration and exploitation activities within American Samoan waters.

I want to thank Governor Pula and Lt. Governor Pulu for hosting an information session on July 2nd and Dr. Sabrina Suluai-Mahuka for her presentation. I also want to thank BOEM for submitting a video presentation to the information session. I appreciate their transparency of the process and this opportunity for everyone to submit their public comments. Enclosed is a link to news article regarding the event: <https://www.samoanews.com/local-news/town-hall-raises-critical-importance-public-engagement-seabed-issue>

In closing, I want to ask that if any form of this process does proceed, that it does not occur within 50 miles of any of the islands of American Samoa, Rose Atoll, and Swains Island. Three miles is simply too close to our shores even if it is the U.S. EEZ. There is strong opposition to any exploration or extraction of minerals from the ocean floor in waters near American Samoa. This is where the people stand, and I stand with the people – to preserve the shark and the turtle and *fa'a samoa*.

Thank you for your consideration, and for taking the time to hear the voices of the people of American Samoa.

Sincerely,



Uifa'atali Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen
Member of Congress