

Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs

Legislative Hearing on H.R. 6062 and H.R. 6273

We are here to discuss two bills: H.R. 6062 introduced by Representative Radewagen and H.R. 6273, introduced by Representative Moylan. I want to thank them for working tirelessly to bring the issues important to their districts to this committee and I look forward and to working with you both to find ways to address the needs of the U.S. territories.

This hearing marks the first step in the right direction. There is much more Congress will need to consider as we continue to discuss and understand the implications of these bills.

H.R. 6062 would return American Samoa's constitutional amendment process to the pre-1983 process of requiring approval from only the Secretary of the Interior.

This committee is committed to territorial self-determination and improving the livelihoods of all Americans on the islands.

We are also committed to our oversight responsibilities and making sure that Americans, both in the mainland and in the territories, are not negatively impacted by federal laws and policies. And that the bills coming out of this committee will positively benefit communities and American prosperity.

To that end, we need to ensure that H.R. 6062 does not unintentionally relinquish an aspect of congressional oversight

and prevent American Samoans from accessing an avenue for recourse against unilateral actions by any Administration.

We also need to ensure that legislation truly resolves the issue it aims to solve. There have been reports that previous constitutional amendment attempts by American Samoa have not yet received review by the Secretary of the Interior. And we have not received the amendment proposals here in Congress. I hope we can get clarity on this today from the Department of the Interior. If the delay is indeed with the Department of the Interior, then this issue may require a different path forward.

Turning to H.R. 6273, this bill has three major components.

First, it would extend authorization for annual Compact Impact grant funds for the Pacific territories of Guam, The Northern Marianas Islands, and American Samoa. It would also require

felons from the Freely Associated States or FAS to be incarcerated in federal facilities and seeks reimbursement for costs associated with those incarcerations. Finally, the bill would place entry requirements for FAS citizens seeking residency in Guam.

It is imperative that Congress ensure that this legislation not only addresses the specific needs of Guam but is also fiscally responsible and does not come into conflict with existing federal law and international agreements.

My colleagues and I on this committee have worked hard these past eight months on the renewal of the Compacts of Free Association and we will continue to work towards its timely passage.

We know fully well how critically important the Compacts are for U.S. national security and the incredible mutual benefits that the U.S.-FAS special relationship provides.

As such, it is important that we find a path forward on addressing the unique needs of Guam, we must continue to work to preserve the U.S.-FAS relationship.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today, particularly those who travelled to great lengths to testify on these important bills.