

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Greubel by
Representative Westerman (No. 1 to No. 5),
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs
Oversight Hearing
January 14, 2026**

Question 1:

Could you speak to the importance of interagency cooperation in addressing threats posed by adversaries in the Pacific?

Answer 1:

Interagency cooperation is essential to countering the complex threats posed by adversaries in the Pacific. The Department of State, Department of War, intelligence community, and other federal partners each bring unique expertise and resources. By coordinating efforts, sharing information, and aligning strategies, we can deter malign activities, respond quickly to emerging challenges, and support our allies and partners. This unified approach is vital to protecting U.S. interests and maintaining stability in the region.

Question 2:

How have the State Department's efforts in curtailing the influence of the PRC in the FAS been successful?

Answer 2:

The State Department has prioritized sustained engagement with the Freely Associated States (FAS) to counter China's efforts to expand its influence in the region. Through robust diplomatic outreach – such as high-level visits, economic and foreign assistance, and close interagency coordination, we have reinforced our partnerships and supported the security of the FAS.

Notably, two FAS countries, Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, maintain diplomatic ties with Taiwan, underscoring the effectiveness of our engagement and collaboration with Taiwan to deliver concrete benefits to the people of these countries. Our efforts have helped maintain regional stability, promote democratic values, and limit opportunities for China to undermine U.S. interests in the Pacific.

Question 3:

Could you explain the degree of Chinese investment in the FAS?

Answer 3:

Chinese investment in the FAS varies across the region, with China seeking to expand its economic and political influence through infrastructure projects, business ventures, and development assistance. The extent of Chinese investment is generally greater in the Federated States of Micronesia, which supports China's "One China Principle," while it remains more limited in Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, both of which maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The State Department continues to work closely with FAS partners to promote transparency, good governance, and sustainable development that supports U.S. interests and regional stability.

Question 4:

Is there monetary amount you could give as to how much the PRC has invested in the FAS?

Answer 4:

At this time, there is no comprehensive or publicly available figure that accurately captures the total monetary value of Chinese investment in the FAS. Chinese investment in the region is often dispersed across various sectors and projects, and transparency regarding the scale and terms of these investments is limited. The State Department continues to monitor Chinese activities closely and works with FAS partners to encourage transparency and accountability in all foreign investment.

Question 5:

Can you please share the importance of the new national security agreement signed by Palau and the U.S. in December of last year, and how it reinforces the U.S.' commitment to regional peace and stability?

Answer 5:

The United States and Palau continue to reaffirm a close partnership and shared resolve to address regional and global challenges together. In recent months we have reached several milestones under the Compact of Free Association, including initiatives that strengthen Palau's law enforcement capacity to dismantle transnational crime networks, such as targeted U.S. assistance for counter-drug trafficking, maritime security, and cybersecurity. These efforts are part of a broader, ongoing partnership, not just a single agreement. The United States is also supporting Palau's economic development, disaster response, retirement security, and public services, including a commitment to build a new hospital and reforms to safeguard the civil service pension system. These concrete steps demonstrate our steadfast commitment to Palau as a trusted partner in the Pacific and reinforce our dedication to regional peace and stability through continued collaboration and deepening bonds of trust and friendship.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Tony Greubel by
Representative Hernandez (No. 1 to No. 13),
U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Natural Resources,
Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs
January 14, 2026

Question 1:

Does the Administration envision ever granting birthright U.S. citizenship to individuals born in the Freely Associated States (FAS)?

Answer 1:

I defer to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Question 2:

During the recent negotiations, did the governments or residents of the FAS formally request U.S. citizenship?

Answer 2:

The final text of the agreements is the definitive outcome of the negotiations between the parties.

Question 3:

One area that would benefit from greater clarity in the public discussion concerns the legal implications of U.S. citizenship for American families who relocate to the Freely Associated States. Please outline the applicable legal framework governing

U.S. citizenship in the following scenarios:

- a. Whether children born in a Freely Associated State to at least one U.S. citizen parent are U.S. citizens.
- b. Assuming those children continue to reside in a Freely Associated State, the citizenship status of subsequent generations who reside in a Freely Associated State.

Answer 3:

In general, a child born abroad to one U.S. citizen does not automatically acquire citizenship at birth unless they meet certain requirements described in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. Some important factors include, which parent is a U.S. citizen, if the parents are married at the time of birth, and if the U.S. citizen parent meets certain statutorily prescribed physical presence

requirements. For more information, I recommend reaching out to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Question 4:

Residents of U.S. territories and Commonwealths enjoy statutory stability regarding their presence in the United States. However, COFA migrants are technically 'foreign non-immigrants' who often face administrative hurdles that U.S. citizens do not. Can you detail the specific requirements and documentation COFA citizens must provide while residing in the U.S. for the purpose of:

- a. Employment verification (I-9 compliance) and;
- b. Driver's license issuance or renewals?
- c. How do these differ from those that U.S. citizens must meet?

Answer 4:

Pursuant to the Compact of Free Association Agreement entered into with each Freely Associated State (FAS) most FAS nationals may engage in occupations in the United States and an unexpired national passport from a FAS state shall be considered to be documentation establishing employment authorization in the United States. For more information, I recommend reaching out to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

I defer to the Department of Transportation and to state governments on the question of requirements, and documentation required, for driver's license issuance or renewals.

Question 5:

Could you describe the legal mechanisms within the Compact framework that govern amendment, suspension, or termination by either party, including the procedural steps required and the legal effects of such actions?

Answer 5:

The Compacts of Free Association (COFAs) with the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Palau each respectively provides that the international agreement may be amended at any time in writing by mutual agreement of the two governments. Each COFA also provides that the international agreement may be terminated unilaterally by one of the two governments. If either party terminates the COFA, certain provisions of the agreement would survive. Other COFA-related agreements may be amended or terminated in accordance with the specific terms of the agreement. Additional domestic statutory requirements may also apply to certain changes to any COFA or related agreement.

Question 6:

How do these mechanisms compare to those found in other long-term international agreements entered into by the United States, and what provisions are designed to manage the transition of rights and obligations should a Compact be modified or brought to an end?

Answer 6:

Like many international agreements, each of the Compacts, and each of their related agreements has provisions, suitable to the content of the agreement, regarding termination, amendments, and for each of the Compacts, survivability provisions that govern which other provisions of the relevant Compact may continue to be in effect if the Compact were to be terminated.

Question 7:

Can the United States Congress unilaterally amend the terms of a Compact of Free Association?

Answer 7:

Any amendments to an international agreement would have to be negotiated and agreed upon between the two parties and brought into force consistent with the applicable domestic procedures of each party.

Question 8:

Can the President of the United States unilaterally rescind a Compact of Free Association?

Answer 8:

For termination of any international agreement, it would be necessary to consider the terms of the particular agreement, relevant constitutional authorities, and applicable domestic legislation.

Question 9:

How long did it take to negotiate the recent extension of the Compacts?

Answer 9:

Negotiations to extend and amend relevant provisions of the Compacts and related agreements began in August 2019, and detailed negotiations began with all three Freely Associated States in May 2020. Those negotiations concluded with the signature of the agreements in late 2023 and early 2024.

Question 10:

Was there any opposition in Congress or in the FAS legislatures to extending the compact?

Answer 10:

The State Department understands that there has been strong bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress for the Compacts of Free Association, as illustrated by the fact all major agreements have been ratified, appropriate Congressional appropriations have been made, and U.S. legislation has been adopted.

There was no significant opposition to the COFAs in FAS legislatures.

Question 11:

We understand that while COFA students are eligible for Pell Grants, they remain ineligible for federal student loans. Does the Administration plan to propose

legislation to make COFA students eligible for federal student loans, or will they remain excluded from this critical financing available to students in U.S. territories?

Answer 11:

I defer to the Department of Education.

Question 12:

What is the Administration's policy regarding the extension of SNAP, SSI, Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security to the FAS?

Answer 12:

I defer to the Department of Agriculture, the Social Security Administration, and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Question 13:

Can you quantify the average delay a COFA veteran faces due to 'status verification' compared to a veteran from a U.S. territory, Commonwealth, or a state?

Answer 13:

I defer to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

