

**Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs
Oversight Hearing
1324 Longworth House Office Building
January 14, 2026
10:00 AM**

"Implementation of the Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2024"

Questions from Rep. Westerman for His Excellency Jackson Soram, Ambassador to the U.S., The Embassy of the Federated States of Micronesia, Washington, D.C.

- 1. Having reliable and updated information is essential for any decision-making process. Having outdated or inaccurate data can lead to wasted resources, missed opportunities, inefficiencies, and misguided strategies in the FAS. It is my understanding that there have been delays in FSM's reporting of certain population or monitoring data to DOI. What is the FSM currently doing to remedy this backlog and to get DOI the necessary data?**

The FSM appreciates the question and fully agrees on the importance of ensuring the highest quality and most reliable data for informed decision-making. The government has been working to complete and validate the results of the most recent national census. Once the government's internal review process is completed, we will make the information publicly available, including to our partners in the United States.

- 2. Under the COFA, billions of dollars are being allocated to the FAS. It is crucial to have proper oversight as to how these dollars are spent. Each FAS is required to submit a single audit report annually. It is my understanding that FSM's FY24 single audit report has yet to be submitted. Please provide the status of that single audit report.**
 - a. What plan does FSM have to improve the timeliness of their single audit submissions?**

The FSM remains firmly committed to ensuring that its single audits are completed in a timely and responsible manner. These audits are as important to the FSM as they are to our partners in the U.S. We want to ensure funds are spent wisely and in accordance with our government's expectations as well as the expectations of our donor partners.

The FSM is composed of five jurisdictions – the National FSM government and the governments of our four States: Yap, Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Kosrae. For any fiscal year's audit cycle to be considered complete, each of these five jurisdictions must conduct, finalize, and submit its respective audit. The FSM audit process is therefore

only complete when all five are concluded. This multijurisdictional process, along with a change in our external auditors in the last several years and the need to increase our professional staff and consultants, has contributed to delays in our recent audit cycles. Despite these issues, the FSM has made meaningful progress. The FY 2023 audits for all five jurisdictions have been completed and submitted. The FY 2024 audits are underway, and we anticipate their completion by June 2026. Preparations are well underway for the FY 2025 audits. In this regard, we are grateful for the U.S. Interior Department's recent technical assistance grants, which are enabling us to expand our auditing capacity. Looking ahead, we expect future audit cycles to become more efficient with additional resources on hand.

3. The COFA requires the FAS and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to enter into negotiated agreements to provide veterans' benefits to U.S. veterans in each respective country. What is the current status of FSM's negotiations with the VA?

The FSM is extremely proud to have one of the highest enlistment rates per capita in the U.S. military. Our citizens have served with honor for decades, and their contributions to U.S. national security are deeply valued by the FSM. Yet despite this record of service, our veterans returning home have faced significant cost and access barriers to VA healthcare. We were therefore very pleased that the COFA Amendments Act of 2024 included language from the bipartisan and bicameral *Care for COFA Veterans Act*, granting the VA new authorities to provide FAS veterans with enhanced access to care, such as telehealth, beneficiary travel, and mail order pharmaceutical services. Unfortunately, the VA has yet to implement these authorities.

Starting in September 2024, the FSM and the VA engaged in detailed and constructive discussions on how the VA could exercise its new statutory authorities to provide health care for FSM veterans of U.S. military service residing in the FSM. The discussions were productive and our teams met regularly, in person, in Washington D.C. and Guam, as well as through numerous virtual conferences. In April 2025, however, the VA unexpectedly and unilaterally ended our discussions. Given the Congressional authorization and the many unmet health needs of the FSM veteran community, the FSM has repeatedly requested that our consultations resume. We remain hopeful that the recent attention on this issue will lead to a resumption of dialogue and action that will lead quickly to the VA's use of the new authorities to assist our veterans. The FSM stands ready to work collaboratively with the VA to ensure rapid implementation of these authorities, so that our veterans, who served faithfully in the U.S. military, can finally access the care they have earned.

4. The U.S.' commitment to veterans of the FAS sends a strong message about the broader U.S. commitment to the FAS and COFA. How can Congress work with you to ensure the VA is implementing these provisions as Congress intended?

We are grateful to the Committee for its continued interest and support on the issue. We look forward to working with Congress and the Trump Administration to ensure FSM veterans receive improved access to the veterans' healthcare benefits they have earned through their service. We are equally committed to working together to ensure that VA's implementation of these provisions fully reflects the intent of the Compact legislation as unanimously approved by Congress. We urge Congress to pass bipartisan legislation which has been introduced in both chambers, which directs VA to carry out telehealth, mail order pharmacy, and beneficiary travel benefits.

5. The COFA requires the FAS and VA to enter into negotiated agreements to provide veterans' benefits to U.S. veterans in each respective country. What is the current status of FSM's negotiations with the VA?

Please see our reply to question #3 above. The FSM stands ready to restart talks and collaborate in implementation as soon as possible.