

Members' Day hearing on for Interior Appropriations
Rep. Aumua Amata Radewagen Testimony

Thank you, Chairman and Ranking Member, for holding this hearing. We can all agree that formulating the budget and going through the appropriations process every year is not an easy task. We all have a responsibility to address the nation's debts while ensuring that the country continues to run smoothly and that vital programs remain funded. One such program with DOI, the American Samoa Government Operations account, is small but remains very important to my district. I understand the need for austerity and budget cuts, but this is not the account to do that. I am requesting that my colleagues in the Appropriations Committee please maintain funding for this account. The account helps to fund our local schools and more importantly, our hospital. DOI's justification for suggesting a cut to this account is a matter of routine at this point, as part of their ongoing effort to make the island more self-sufficient. I am just as committed to that goal, however in order to reach that state of self-sufficiency, we still need the resources from this account. Last year, appropriations generously allocated additional funds to do a study on improvements to the local LBJ hospital. Now that the study has been completed, maintaining funding for this account is needed to carry out these improvements and put American on the same footing as the rest of the country when it comes to healthcare. This is even more important, considering the recent events with Coronavirus and my district's proximity to Asia. I want to thank the committee again for allowing me to testify, and I look forward to continuing working with you on this important issue.