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House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior Members Day Testimony
In support of the American Samoa Operations Account
March 5, 2026

Thank you, Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Pingree, for the opportunity to submit testimony on the needs of American Samoa for their budget under the Interior Department and their Office of Insular Affairs.

As a non-voting delegate, I rely on my colleagues to move forward on policies that protect the fragile interests of my district, and to that end, I want to thank you and the other members of the committee for your consistent support of the US territories.

I won't take up much of your time, as you've heard this from me before, but American Samoa remains one of the smallest economies in the nation. We continue to do our best to grow and make full use of the federal support we receive. However, it doesn't take much to set us back. Without a buffer, any projects and investments we make to bring the territory up to par are quickly undone.

Therefore, I am requesting a modest increase of \$1M for the American Samoa Government Operations account at DOI. This is inline with our appropriations from last year and will offset inflation and keep American Samoa from falling behind the rest of the country.

I know these are difficult budgeting times due to inflation – inflation which is disproportionately affects the small distant territories due to higher transport fuel and insurance costs. I accordingly am keeping my request to \$1 million which is less than the 3% national inflation adjusted increase and far less than the local inflation rate.

I also ask for the continued inclusion of report language to set aside \$3M from that account specifically for our Community College. Educating our young Americans is the best way to maximize the use of this account and invest in our territory's future. We remain proud to have among the highest military enlistment rates in the county, and wish to continue contributing to this great country, not just through military service but also by investing in the next generation of great thinkers and business owners.

I would also like the committee to consider a general increase in support for the Office of Insular Affairs overall budget so that they have more leeway to invest in educational projects in the territories.

I want to thank you again Chair and Ranking Member for your time and consideration of my request. While not a very large amount in the grand scheme of things, this small account which funds our hospital, judiciary, and most importantly our education system continues to do so much good for the people of American Samoa.