
SUBSTITUTE SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 8017

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2020 Regular Session

By Senate State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Hasegawa, Hunt, Billig, Saldaña, Stanford, and Wilson, C.)

READ FIRST TIME 02/07/20.

1 TO THE HONORABLE DONALD J. TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,
2 AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF
3 REPRESENTATIVES, AND TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
4 THE UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED:

5 We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of
6 the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled,
7 respectfully represent and petition as follows:

8 WHEREAS, Since 1986, Compacts of Free Association (COFA) between
9 the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, the
10 Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Yap, Pohnpei), and the
11 United States allow citizens of nations with COFA agreements to serve
12 in the United States military and enter, lawfully reside, and work in
13 the United States; and

14 WHEREAS, The relationship between the nations with Compacts of
15 Free Association and the United States includes economic development
16 and a military presence; and

17 WHEREAS, The region served as a testing ground for atmospheric
18 nuclear weapons between 1946 and 1958, which resulted in past and
19 current inhabitants being exposed to high levels of radioactive
20 fallout; and

21 WHEREAS, When the Compacts were originally signed, COFA migrants
22 were eligible for Medicaid and other federal programs; and

1 WHEREAS, Despite paying state and federal taxes, these migrants
2 were excluded from benefits as a consequence of the federal Personal
3 Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act in 1996; and

4 WHEREAS, This ineligibility for federal health programs has
5 exacerbated barriers to health care access for this population, which
6 has led to poorer health outcomes and increased, long-term costs on
7 the health care system as a whole; and

8 WHEREAS, Research shows that people living in households in which
9 the primary language spoken at home is not English, seniors, people
10 with disabilities, and people who identify as Native Hawaiian or
11 Pacific Islanders are disproportionately impacted by health
12 inequities; and

13 WHEREAS, Washington state has the second-largest population of
14 Kosraeans and the third-largest population of Palauans and
15 Marshallese people in the United States according to the 2010 United
16 States Census; and

17 WHEREAS, Washington recognized the need to help address health
18 inequities by providing support for citizens of nations with COFA
19 agreements in need of food, medical, and dental care assistance in
20 Washington state; and

21 WHEREAS, Washington state continues to advocate, alongside other
22 states, for congressional legislation to restore federal benefits for
23 COFA communities who continue to provide military service at higher
24 rates than the overall population of the United States and valuable
25 economic and cultural contributions in the United States; and

26 WHEREAS, The COFA communities in Washington are engaged in
27 providing feedback regarding COFA renewal and participated in
28 listening sessions as part of the recent United States Government
29 Accountability Office study of COFA migrants in the United States in
30 the fall of 2019;

31 NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully request that
32 Congress take the appropriate steps to: Restore federal benefits for
33 COFA migrants, the including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
34 Program and Medicaid; ensure that citizens of nations with COFA
35 agreements are appropriately counted as part of the 2020 census;
36 consider the uniqueness of COFA status in all immigration policies,
37 including exempting citizens of nations with COFA agreements from
38 changes to the public charge rules; and immediately begin work on
39 COFA renewal negotiations.

1 BE IT RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately
2 transmitted to the Honorable Donald J. Trump, President of the United
3 States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the
4 House of Representatives, and each member of Congress from the State
5 of Washington.

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