

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 176 URGING HAWAII'S
CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO WORK WITH THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO DEVELOP A PROGRAM OR PASS
LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE VETERANS FROM COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION
NATIONS WITH ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY MEDICAL CARE WITHIN THEIR
RESPECTIVE COMMUNITIES

PRESENTATION TO THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS, MILITARY, & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, & CULTURE
AND THE ARTS

AND

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

BY

MR. RONALD P. HAN, JR.
DIRECTOR OF STATE OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

March 28, 2017
11:00 a.m.
Rm 329

Good morning Chair Ito, Chair Belatti, Vice-Chair Tokioka, Vice-Chair Kobayashi and members of the Committees:

I'm Ron Han, Director of the State Office of Veterans Services. I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony **in support** of HCR 176.

Eligible Veterans who reside in the Compact of Free Association (COFA) Nations deserve and have earned the right to quality healthcare. Currently, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Foreign Medical Program (FMP) Office is responsible for determining eligibility for reimbursed medical treatment while traveling or residing abroad with the exception of the Philippines. Reimbursed medical care for U.S. Veterans residing or traveling in Canada and other foreign countries, like the COFA Nations, is limited to treatment for VA rated service-connected disabilities only. By the VA guidance provided, as long as the service is medically necessary for the treatment of a VA rated service-connected condition, it will be covered. In addition, healthcare services and support must be accepted by VA and/or the U.S. medical community, such as the American Medical Association and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Prior authorization to receive reimbursed medical treatment must be obtained from the FMP Office unless an emergency situation exists.

Consequently, Title 38 United States Code entitled: Veterans Benefits and Service Members Civil Relief Act, must be reviewed and assessed for changes to permit the VA Secretary to expend resources to deliver direct care in foreign areas such as Micronesia and other COFA Nations.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Hawaii's Veterans and their families in support of HCR 176.

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March 28, 2017

Hawaii State Legislature
Veterans, Military, & International Affairs Committee
415 S. Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Good morning Chair, Vice-chair, and members of the committee:

My name is Michael P. Daniels and I speak in support of this measure. My reasons for supporting the measure are based on (1) personal experience as the descendent of a combat veteran and (2) retrospective experience as a Worldwide Support for Development (WSD) Honda Fellow (non-residential), Pacific Forum, US Center for Strategic and International Studies and where I studied health security and its strategic implications for American Security in the South Pacific. Consequently, my personal experience combined with studies in regional security architecture suggest that supporting HCR 176, Medical Care for COFA veterans makes sense from the humanitarian, financial, and regional security architecture lenses.

1. Personal Experience

My Grandfather, Henry C. Daniels, served as a combat medic during World War II against Hitler's war machine. He was wounded on several occasions, and according to my Father, Michael P. Daniels, Sr., a retired US Department of Defense Industrial Specialist for the US Navy's Special Emphasis Programs, and Navy veteran, my Grandfather "spent the best years of his life in and out of the VA." Additionally, my Grandfather resented the label "disabled"

because of its negative connotations and implied helplessness that the label carried. My Grandfather made a heroic effort at “being normal” and bore the physical and psychological scars of prolonged combat with great dignity and the stoicism characteristic of the “Greatest Generation.” Regrettably, when my Grandfather passed away at age 42, the circumstances of the time forced my Dad to become the “man of the house” at age 13. In 1962’s rural Pennsylvania’s “coal country”, this meant taking over the family business, which consisted of (1) coal mining and delivery, (2) hauling trash, and (3) moving furniture – in short sacrificing his youth to feed his family through back-breaking, physically demanding labor. Thus, the intergenerational struggle in my family reminds us that providing quality care for our veterans also affects their families, potentially for generations. At the same time, failure to provide care for our veterans can adversely impact (1) the veteran, (2) their families, and (3) potentially their communities for generations. HCR 176 presents an opportunity to not only support our veterans and their families, but also generate political goodwill with several long-term benefits.

2. Strategic Significance of HCR 176

HCR 176 is unique because it serves the veterans, their families, and can also boost American security and diplomatic interests on our largest border – the nearly 2 million squared nautical mile border between Hawaii and the Compact of Free & Associated States (COFA) such as the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia. According to Eric Shibuya, the US-Compact relationship is the “strongest defense relationship the United States has with another country”, that “the general US indifference regarding this relationship has strained the generally positive relationship and good political capital with these countries, and consequently, neglecting the relationship “with a country whose location could have greater

security implications in the longer haul” is a mistake that the US cannot afford.¹ Shibuya also stated “the United States’ general goodwill and political capital in the region is not endless, nor is it unchallenged; and it would do well to consider how to reinvigorate its profile in the region, particular with Pacific Island nations (PINs).

Historical Lens

From the historical lens, Shibuya described the Compact of Free Association (COFA), a 1986 defense agreement that would obligate the US to defend the Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia “and their people from attack or threats thereof as the United States and its citizens are defended... similar wording exists for the Palau Compact.²” Finally, Congressional testimony from Kurt Campbell, **Assistant Secretary of Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs** at the US Department State affirmed Shibuya’s assessment that the defense of the COFA is one-sided³ based on the fact that while COFA nations do not maintain their own militaries; “Micronesians, Marshallese, and Palauans volunteer to serve in the U.S. military at a rate higher than in any individual U.S. state.⁴”

Economic Lens

¹ Shibuya, Eric. "Still Missing in the Rebalance? The United States and the Pacific Island Countries." In *Regionalism, Security & Cooperation in Oceania*, edited by Rouben Azizian and Carleton Cramer, p. 65. Honolulu: Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2015

² Ibid, p. 62

³ Ibid, p. 62

⁴ Campbell, Kurt. US Department of State, “Testimony before the house committee on foreign affairs, subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment.” Last modified September 29, 2010. Accessed August 21, 2014. Retrieved from the US Department of State website: <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2010/09/148318.htm>

From the security lens, the South Pacific represents America's largest border, consisting of approximately 1.7 million nautical miles,⁵ an area larger than the contiguous United States. Second, the US has signed agreements with Kiribati, Palau, Tonga, RMI, and FSM to strengthen cooperation to address challenges in human-, arms-, and drug-trafficking and illegal fishing.⁶ From an economic standpoint, Admiral Locklear, former commander of US Pacific Command, made the point that "five trillion dollars of commerce rides on the sea lanes of the Asia-Pacific each year" and the people who call the South Pacific islands home "sit right in the middle of it."⁷ Finally, because the PINs connect markets in the Americas, Asia, and Australia by waterways, the welfare and stability of the PINs is in the best economic, security, and humanitarian interests of the US, Latin America, Australia, and Asia.

Balance of Power

From the regional lens, Jenny Hayward-Jones stated "the region has long attracted the interests of major powers."⁸ Examples from Hayward-Jones' studies include "France and the United States hold territories of various statuses in the region. Japan has been a long-term player, and China and Taiwan have been on the scene for many years." Finally, Hayward-Jones identified speculation that "the power dynamics in the region are changing, but the region has not yet become an object of great power competition."

3. Summation

⁵ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service, "Pacific islands regional office brochure." Last modified 2010. Accessed July 10, 2014. http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/Library/PAO/pdfs/PIRO_brochure.PUBLIC.pdf

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Prasad, Kailash. "India looks far east: a growing presence in the Pacific could have significant benefits for India." *The Diplomat*. Last modified July 10, 2014. Accessed August 21, 2014. <http://thediplomat.com/2014/04/india-looks-far-east/>

⁸ Hayward-Jones, Jenny; Rouben Azzizian, and Carleton Cramer "Australia and Security in the Pacific Islands Region" In *Regionalism, Security, & Cooperation in Oceania*, p. 44-57. Honolulu: Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2015.

In summation, the South Pacific COMPAC nations represent a variety of significant issues to the American people. First, supporting HCR 176 can support our veterans from COFA nations who serve in the US military in the highest per-capita rate in America. Second, supporting our veterans who served honorably in the US military can benefit the veterans' families and communities, potentially for generations. Third, supporting our veterans can generate a great deal of political good will in the part of the world that (1) represents America's largest security commitment according to Shibuya and (2) represents America's largest border with sea lanes connecting the Americas with markets in Asia and Australia. Fourth, historical precedent citing changing power dynamics in the region (i.e. Rise of China, Imperial Japan in the 1930s and 1940s, etc.) also suggest that it is in our nation's best interest to pay attention to this region. Consequently, investing in the well-being of our veterans represents a small investment with significant returns at (1) the local level – families, (2) geopolitical level, and (3) regional security architecture.

HCR 176

Veterans from COFA Nations; Medical Care

11am Tuesday 28 March

Room 329
Hawaii State Capitol
415 S Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

This is testimony in SUPPORT of HCR 176. HCR 176 urges Hawaii's Congressional Delegation to work with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to develop a program to provide veterans from Compact of Free Association Nations with access to high-quality medical care within their respective communities.

As a public health professional I believe healthcare is a human right. Due to the geopolitical history of the US involvement with COFA Nations, it is our responsibility to provide adequate high-quality medical care to all citizens of these nations. This is especially true for those individuals who have risked their lives to help protect the citizens of all of our nations. Providing healthcare COFA migrant veterans in their home nations will prevent them from having to leave their homeland and their support systems in order to seek the lifesaving treatment they need.

As a wife of someone who serves in the Hawaii Air Guard I understand the sacrifice of the men and women who serve in our military service. They leave the comforts of their homes and put themselves in harms way so we may live the lives we live. I respect their sacrifices and believe in the very least, we have the responsibility to take care of them when they return. This includes providing high-quality medical care. And this includes ALL of our veterans.

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of this important resolution.

Megan Kiyomi Inada Hagiwara, DrPH

HCR176

Submitted on: 3/25/2017

Testimony for VMI/HLT on Mar 28, 2017 11:00AM in Conference Room 329

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
T.J. Davies	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

LATE

HCR176

Submitted on: 3/28/2017

Testimony for VMI/HLT on Mar 28, 2017 11:00AM in Conference Room 329

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kosta Stamoulis	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I support HCR 176

LATE

HCR176

Submitted on: 3/28/2017

Testimony for VMI/HLT on Mar 28, 2017 11:00AM in Conference Room 329

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Lisa	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Aside from all the important moral points made for supporting HCR176, we must also be mindful that other countries are circling this very large (mostly ocean) area and doing whatever they can to encourage relationships with the Pacific Islands that are a part of this COFA agreement. Please make sure to look into and study the national and worldwide consequences should the agreement NOT be extended. If another country were to swoop in and take over support of these countries, what would that do to our national security and could that jeopardize any alliances with other larger countries nearby? Mahalo, Lisa Shozuya