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# SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING THE HISTORIC, CULTURAL, AND STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS  
BETWEEN THE PEOPLES OF OCEANIA, OF WHICH HAWAI'I AND THE  
FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES ARE A PART.

1           WHEREAS, the quasi-continental region of Oceania in the  
2 Pacific Ocean constitutes what has been described by renowned  
3 Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa as a "sea of islands", with  
4 interconnections of history, culture, and strategic interests;  
5 and  
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7           WHEREAS, some historians argue that civilizations in  
8 Oceania did not consider the boundary of their islands as being  
9 limited to their shorelines but rather perceived space in a much  
10 broader sense of space that extended far across the sea and sky;  
11 and  
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13           WHEREAS, the diverse cultures and peoples of Oceania have  
14 significant deep and historic ties amongst each other, such as  
15 the contemporary theory that Pacific Island peoples are all  
16 originally migrants from Taiwan and Southeast Asia; and  
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18           WHEREAS, other commonalities include an Austronesian  
19 linguistic background, hundreds of years of trade across the  
20 Pacific prior to western contact, similar understandings of  
21 spirituality such as the concept of mana, as well as similar  
22 cultural practices such as the use and preparation of taro; and  
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24           WHEREAS, the geographical and anthropological descriptions  
25 of Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia are western  
26 categorizations of the Pacific Islands that by themselves do not  
27 fully capture the complex and diverse nature of cultures in  
28 Oceania; and



1 WHEREAS, the Compacts of Free Association (COFA) are  
2 international agreements between the United States and the  
3 independent nation states of the Republic of Palau, the Republic  
4 of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia,  
5 collectively known as the Freely Associated States; and  
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7 WHEREAS, these compacts allow the United States to operate  
8 armed forces in the Freely Associates States and to utilize land  
9 for operating bases and, in turn, guarantees that the United  
10 States is responsible for protecting these affiliate countries;  
11 and  
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13 WHEREAS, the United States provides these countries access  
14 to many of the United States' domestic programs, including  
15 disaster response and recovery programs under the Federal  
16 Emergency Management Agency, some United States Department of  
17 Education programs including the Pell Grant, and services  
18 provided by the National Weather Service, the United States  
19 Postal Service, the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal  
20 Communications Commission, and United States representation to  
21 the International Frequency Registration Board of the  
22 International Telecommunication Union; and  
23

24 WHEREAS, the area in which the Freely Associated States are  
25 located is incredibly strategic, lying directly on the way from  
26 the United States to Asia and Australia, and whoever controls  
27 those waters controls American access to the entire Indo-Pacific  
28 region; and  
29

30 WHEREAS, these states were all integral to the Allied  
31 victory in the Pacific Theatre of World War II, with the  
32 Gilbert, Marshall, Mariana, and Palau Island campaigns becoming  
33 the first steps in the drive across the central Pacific by the  
34 United States Pacific Command; and  
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36 WHEREAS, these victories were crucial in neutralizing  
37 Japanese bases in the central Pacific, supporting the Allied  
38 drive to retake the Philippines, and providing bases for a  
39 strategic bombing campaign against Japan; and



1 WHEREAS, the fifty-five immigrants from Micronesia who  
2 arrived aboard *The Stormbird* in 1877 were some of the first  
3 plantation labor migrants to Hawai'i; and  
4

5 WHEREAS, historians note that the number of Micronesian  
6 migrants brought to work on plantations increased to over  
7 fifteen hundred in the next few years; and  
8

9 WHEREAS, King Kalākaua and Queen Kapi'olani regularly  
10 invited Micronesian chiefs and community leaders to birthday  
11 celebrations and events at 'Iolani Palace as a sign of  
12 appreciation and hospitality; and  
13

14 WHEREAS, contemporary treaties arising out of the special  
15 and unique relationship between the three COFA island nations  
16 and the United States allow island citizens to enter the United  
17 States without work permits or visas to study, live, and work  
18 and to access benefits available to United States citizens, such  
19 as driver's licenses and health care; and  
20

21 WHEREAS, the federal government estimates that there are  
22 currently over twenty-five thousand COFA migrants living in  
23 Hawai'i; and  
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25 WHEREAS, citizens from the Freely Associated States  
26 volunteer to serve in the United States Armed Forces at per  
27 capita rates higher than most states; and  
28

29 WHEREAS, there is a negative perception of COFA migrants in  
30 Hawai'i as people who drain resources and are racial opponents,  
31 which has manifested through discrimination against citizens of  
32 the Freely Associated States in access to housing, education,  
33 and employment; and  
34

35 WHEREAS, despite these hardships and challenges, COFA  
36 migrants participate in economic activities by providing labor,  
37 consuming goods and services, and paying fees and taxes to the  
38 government, such as an estimated contribution of \$336,200,000 to  
39 the Hawai'i gross domestic product in 2017; and



1 WHEREAS, COFA migrants also contribute to the vibrancy of  
2 indigenous cultural practices in the State, helping to keep  
3 native cultural traditions alive in the modern day as best  
4 illustrated by the late Mau Piailug of Satawal and his entire  
5 genealogy, whose contributions of their own traditional ocean  
6 navigation resulted in a cultural revolution for native  
7 Hawaiians to reconnect with a part of their culture that was  
8 being lost; and  
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10 WHEREAS, the COFA island families residing in this country  
11 should be fairly treated in recognition of their contributions  
12 and the special and unique relationship between the Freely  
13 Associated States and the United States; now, therefore,  
14

15 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first  
16 Legislature of the State of Hawai'i, Regular Session of 2021, the  
17 House of Representatives concurring, that this body recognizes  
18 the historic, cultural, and strategic connections between the  
19 peoples of Oceania, of which Hawai'i and the Freely Associated  
20 States are a part; and  
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22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body recognizes the  
23 contributions and accomplishments of the COFA community in the  
24 State of Hawai'i and the broader United States; and  
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26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body condemns racial or  
27 cultural discrimination, violence, and defamation against COFA  
28 citizens; and  
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30 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body recognizes the geo-  
31 strategic importance of these nations to the national security  
32 of the United States and Hawaii against foreign adversaries,  
33 particularly in light of current aggressive and illegal  
34 posturing and exertion of influence by the People's Republic of  
35 China in the region; and  
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37 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body respectfully requests  
38 the United States Congress to continue to support economic and  
39 scientific assistance to the Freely Associated States; and  
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41 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body urges the Governor to  
42 collaborate and exchange best practices with the heads of states



1 of these nations on commonly shared policy issues such as  
2 combating sea level rise, ecological protection, and promoting  
3 indigenous rights; and  
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5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body urges the Governor to  
6 implement programs and training to combat discrimination against  
7 Pacific Island communities, including expanding language access  
8 and countering bullying against COFA students in public schools;  
9 and  
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11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
12 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Hawai'i Congressional  
13 delegation, Governor, Director of Labor and Industrial  
14 Relations, Director of Health, Director of Public Safety,  
15 Superintendent of Education, Chairperson to the Hawaii Advisory  
16 Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, and  
17 Consulates General of the Republic of Palau, Republic of the  
18 Marshall Islands, and Federated States of Micronesia.

