H.R. No. 1783

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, Shortly after World War II, the United States assumed administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands under a United Nations strategic trusteeship, which provided for U.S. control over development of the islands' economies and international relations, as well as military access to territory within the islands; and

WHEREAS, The treatment of the Pacific Islands as a strategic trust territory allowed the United States Atomic Energy Commission to establish the Pacific Proving Grounds in the Marshall Islands, where 67 atmospheric nuclear weapons were tested on a number of inhabited islands, some of which had not been evacuated, between 1946 and 1958; several island residents and their descendants who were in the vicinity of the test proving grounds continue to exhibit medical conditions that may have resulted from exposure to nuclear fallout, which is still measurable on some islands; and

WHEREAS, The area formerly known as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands consists of three groups of islands, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia, which are today referred to as the Compact of Free Association islands; notwithstanding their status as independent, sovereign nations, the COFA islands are heavily dependent on U.S. government grants and are subjected to U.S. military presence under the COFA treaty; and

WHEREAS, Because of the unique relationship between the three COFA nations and the U.S., the COFA treaties allow island citizens to enter the U.S. without visas to study, live, and work and to have access to available services such as health care; since the implementation of the treaties, citizens of the COFA islands have moved to the U.S. for education and work opportunities because stagnant island economies have made it difficult for residents to find jobs or obtain quality education in their home countries; moreover, COFA island citizens volunteer to serve in the U.S. armed forces at a higher rate per capita than U.S. citizens; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 3,500 COFA citizens reside in Texas and directly contribute to the state through volunteering and service in various workplace settings, including industrial, managerial, and educational fields; in addition, numerous COFA islanders serving in the U.S. military are stationed at Texas military bases, including Fort Hood, Fort Bliss, Fort Sam Houston, Lackland Air Force Base, Sheppard AFB, Randolph AFB, and Goodfellow AFB; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, Congress and some state governments have reduced benefits, including access to medical coverage, for which COFA islanders residing in the U.S. have historically been eligible; and

WHEREAS, COFA islanders and their children who reside in the U.S. should be fairly treated in recognition of the long-standing connection between the U.S. and the COFA islands and the continued need of the U.S. to maintain a strong military and economic presence in the island nations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 86th Texas Legislature hereby express support for the rights of Compact of Free Association islanders residing in Texas and extend to them sincere appreciation for their extraordinary commitment to the service and defense of our nation.

Buckley

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Speaker of the House

I certify that H.R. No. 1783 was adopted by the House on May 20, 2019, by a non-record vote.

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Chief Clerk of the House