

By: Buckley

H.R. No. 1783

R E S O L U T I O N

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

7 WHEREAS, The treatment of the Pacific Islands as a strategic
8 trust territory allowed the United States Atomic Energy Commission
9 to establish the Pacific Proving Grounds in the Marshall Islands,
10 where 67 atmospheric nuclear weapons were tested on a number of
11 inhabited islands, some of which had not been evacuated, between
12 1946 and 1958; several island residents and their descendants who
13 were in the vicinity of the test proving grounds continue to exhibit
14 medical conditions that may have resulted from exposure to nuclear
15 fallout, which is still measurable on some islands; and

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

24 WHEREAS, Because of the unique relationship between the three

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

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

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

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

27 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 86th Texas

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1 Legislature hereby express support for the rights of Compact of
2 Free Association islanders residing in Texas and extend to them
3 sincere appreciation for their extraordinary commitment to the
4 service and defense of our nation.