Resolution No. 50-BOD-02, CD1

"The Association of Pacific Island Legislatures extends its full support of the efforts of American Samoa and its delegate to the United States Congress, the Honorable Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, in advancing the American Samoa Protection of Industry, Resources and Employment proposal now before the Congress and further advocates for the passage of the general tenets of this important legislation as it will provide great stability to the fragile economic state of American Samoa."

WHEREAS, since its inception, the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures (APIL) has closely monitored the economic stability of its members, particularly the successes and shortcomings of the tuna canning industry in American Samoa; and

WHEREAS, the model set by American Samoa in successfully operating tuna canning plants is one which APIL member countries have shown great interest in possibly adopting and providing assistance so that the industry continues to survive and thrive in the region is important those hoping to develop similar operations; and

WHEREAS, there exists a clear economic interconnectivity between island nations of the Pacific and the successes of one island nation benefits from another as travel and trade is more frequent and the sharing of resources becomes common. The same effects are felt when an island nation’s economy struggles. Exoduses are seen as families move to neighboring nations in search of jobs. Economies are strained and a dangerous cycle begins where more and more people move in masses to places where they can survive, often times making an immediate move to the U.S. This was the case shortly after World War II when military installations were closed and large portions of the island populations moved to Hawaii and the West Coast; and

WHEREAS, like all Pacific island jurisdictions, American Samoa has struggled through these hard economic times and coupled with the mandate for them and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to comply with the raising of minimum wage levels, the global economic downturn has already forced the closure of one of its tuna canning plants. The remaining plant has already indicated that any further strains on its operations would leave them little choice but to also close its doors. With the tuna canning industry being the second largest employer in the Territory, the devastation of both plants closing would surely leave the economy of this U.S. Territory lifeless. Recovery, if at all possible, would take years, possibly even decades; and
WHEREAS, the American Samoa Congressional Delegate, the Honorable Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, introduced in Congress the *American Samoa Protection of Industry, Resources and Employment* (ASPIRE) which proposes to encourage its tuna industry to increase its production capacity which will undoubtedly stimulate growth in the Territory's economy. The legislation also proposes to foster growth by garnering the participation of both public and private sectors of the economy who will develop and formulate various incentives intended to allow the industry to survive and thrive; and

WHEREAS, American Samoa's canning operations need to remain competitive. The goal of ASPIRE is to help level the playing field for this U.S. Territory which has to meet federal minimum wage mandates while its competitors exploit cheap labor and pay their workers $0.75 or less per hour; and

WHEREAS, the APIL Board of Directors support the passage of ASPIRE by the Congress and hopes for its approval by the President. The benefits from its implementation will surely encompass and reach all of the Pacific Island jurisdictions, particularly those who have close economic, social, and cultural ties with American Samoa; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Directors of the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures, 50th Board Meeting, December 2-3, 2009, State of Hawaii, that the Board of Directors on behalf of the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures hereby requests the United States Congress, to approve and pass H.R. 3583, the *American Samoa Protection of Industry, Resources and Employment* or ASPIRE Act and that APIL extends its full support of this important legislation and applauds the tireless efforts of American Samoa and its leaders in getting this bill passed and signed into law; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the APIL President shall certify, and the APIL Secretary shall attest to the adoption hereof and that copies of the same shall be thereafter transmitted to the Honorable Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, American Samoa Delegate; the Honorable Nick Rahall, Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources; the Honorable Daniel K. Inouye, U.S. Senator; the Honorable Daniel Akaka, U.S. Senator; the Honorable Ken Salazar, U.S. Secretary of the Department of the Interior; the Honorable Togiola Tulafono, Governor of American Samoa; to the Honorable Gregorio Kilili Sablan, CNMI Delegate; to the Honorable Madeleine Z. Bordallo, Guam Delegate; to the Honorable Donna M. Christensen, U.S. Virgin Islands Delegate to Congress; and to the Presiding Legislative Officers and Chief Executives of each of the APIL member jurisdictions.

DULY AND REGULARLY ADOPTED ON THE 3rd DAY OF DECEMBER 2009

J. KALANI ENGLISH
PRESIDENT

JUDITH T. WON PAT, ED.D.
SECRETARY