



Association of Pacific Island Legislatures

American Samoa
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
FSM, State of Chuuk
FSM, State of Kosrae
FSM, State of Pohnpei
FSM, State of Yap
Island of Guam
Republic of Kiribati
Republic of the Marshall Islands
Republic of Nauru
Republic of Palau
State of Hawaii

A RESOLUTION

Resolution No. 38-GA-14

“Whole heartedly applauding the efforts of the three Presidents of the Freely Associated States for their diligent efforts to obtain the U.S. Federal Government’s enactment of the COFA Veterans Review Act of 2019, and urgently requesting the three FAS Presidents, along with the Governors of Guam and the CNMI, to continue their efforts to obtain the full compliment of benefits that the United States Government generally offers to Military veterans.”

1
2 **WHEREAS**, the welfare and availability of benefits for veterans of the U.S.
3 Military has long been on the minds of the Members of the Association of Pacific Island
4 Legislatures; and

5 **WHEREAS**, past resolutions adopted by this Association have called upon the
6 Government of the United States of America to extend the full complement of veteran
7 benefits to the U.S. Military veterans who are citizens of the Freely Associated States and
8 who have chosen to return to their home islands; and

9 **WHEREAS**, the assembled delegates of Association of Pacific Island
10 Legislatures at this General Assembly of the APIL are now pleased to hear of
11 encouraging developments in line with our past requests and the efforts of many other
12 groups to obtain benefits to which our citizen veterans are entitled and for which they are
13 so deserving; and

14 **WHEREAS**, on May 20, 2019, Her Excellency Hilda C. Heine, President of the
15 Republic of the Marshall Islands, His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the
16 Federated States of Micronesia, and His Excellency Tommy Remenegsau Jr., President of
17 the Republic of Palau, all participated in a solemn, wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb
18 of the Unknown Soldier in the Arlington National Ceremony; and

19 **WHEREAS**, in attendance at the ceremony were several notable dignitaries of
20 the United States Government, including the Honorable Robert Wilkie, Secretary of the

1 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as high ranking officers of U.S. Military;
2 and

3 **WHEREAS**, during this visit to America’s capital, all three of the FAS Presidents
4 had the opportunity to meet together with His Excellency Donald J. Trump, President of
5 the United States of America; and

6 **WHEREAS**, in a joint statement issued by all four Presidents it is recorded that:

7 *“We remember the sacrifices of our sons and daughters to guarantee a more*
8 *secure world where freedom can thrive. Today, many citizens of the*
9 *Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated*
10 *States of Micronesia serve in the United States military. Their service is a*
11 *proud reminder of our countries’ enduring commitment to our shared*
12 *security in a dynamic and critical region.”; and*

13 **WHEREAS**, as the three FAS Presidents were preparing for their trip to
14 Washington D.C., visiting the Arlington National Cemetery and calling upon the White
15 House, two bills were being introduced into the U.S. Congress; Senate Bill No. 1222 and
16 House Resolution No. 2916, both of which are entitled the “Compact of Free Association
17 (or COFA) Veterans Review Act of 2019” and both of which have similar provisions;
18 and

19 **WHEREAS**, both bills call upon the Secretary of the U.S. Department of
20 Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide hospital care and medical
21 services to the veterans of the Freely Associated States and to conduct a study on the
22 feasibility and advisability of establishing regional offices, suboffices, contact units, or
23 other subordinate offices of the Department of Veterans Affairs in the Freely Associated
24 States to provide such care and services; and

25 **WHEREAS**, in the month of May, 2019, President Donald J. Trump signed
26 important bi-partisan legislation into law substantially increasing veterans’ access to
27 private medical facilities when those veterans reside a substantial commute time or
28 distance from formal veterans hospitals; and

29 **WHEREAS**, near the end of the visit of the three FAS Presidents to America’s
30 capital, His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the Federated States of

1 Micronesia, and His Excellency Tommy Remenegsau Jr., President of the Republic of
2 Palau, both had the opportunity to meet one-on-one with the Secretary of the U.S.
3 Department of Veterans Affairs, during which visits, the Presidents had the opportunity
4 to have Secretary Robert Wilkie focus on the needs of FAS veterans and they also had
5 the opportunity to emphasize the need for the U.S. Congress and the U.S. President to
6 pass and approve the ground-breaking COFA Veterans Review Act of 2019; now,
7 therefore,

8 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the 38th General Assembly of the Association of Pacific
9 Island Legislatures, July 23-26, 2019, Republic of the Marshall Islands, that this
10 Association of policy and law makers whole heartedly applauds the efforts of Her
11 Excellency Hilda C. Heine, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, His
12 Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, and His
13 Excellency Tommy Remenegsau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, for their diligent
14 efforts to obtain the benefits for the veterans residing in their countries that the United
15 States Government offers to Military veterans generally; and

16 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the three Presidents of the Freely
17 Associated States are urgently requested to continue their efforts to obtain the enactment
18 of the COFA Veterans Review Act of 2019; and

19 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the three Presidents of the Freely
20 Associated States are also requested to work in concert with the Governors of Guam and
21 the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands so that the needs of the Military
22 veterans across the entire Micronesian Pacific will be addressed; and

23 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the three Presidents of the Freely
24 Associated States and the two Governors of the U.S. Micronesian Islands are respectfully
25 requested to increase the scope of their efforts to ensure that our veterans will have full
26 access to all the beneficial programs that are being offered to the veterans residing on the
27 U.S. Mainland, including education programs, counseling, housing and home loan
28 guaranties, job training, small business loans and assistance, and military funerals, burials
29 and memorials; and

1 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the APIL President shall certify, and the
2 APIL Secretary shall attest to the adoption hereof and that copies of the same shall be
3 transmitted to Her Excellency Hilda C. Heine, President of the Republic of the Marshall
4 Islands, to His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the Federated States of
5 Micronesia, to His Excellency Tommy Remenegsau Jr., President of the Republic of
6 Palau, to the Honorable Lou Leon Guerrero, Governor of the Island of Guam, to the
7 Honorable Ralph Deleon Guerrero Torres, Governor of the Commonwealth of the
8 Northern Mariana Islands; to the Honorable Robert Wilkies, Secretary of the U.S.
9 Department of Veterans Affairs; to sponsor of the U.S. Senate COFA Review Act of
10 2019, bill number S. 1222, Senator Brian Schatz of Hawaii, to the co-sponsors of the U.S.
11 House of Representatives COFA Review Act of 2019, bill number H.R. 2916,
12 Representatives: Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii, Amata Coleman Radewage of American
13 Samoa, Ed Case of Hawaii, Michael San Nicolas of Guam and Dan Young of Alaska, and
14 to the Presiding Legislative Officers and to the additional Chief Executives of the APIL
15 Member Jurisdictions.

DULY AND REGULARLY ADOPTED ON THE 26TH DAY OF JULY, 2019.



NELSON STEPHEN
ACTING PRESIDENT



IVAN A. BLANCO
SECRETARY

