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June 5, 2017

Serial No. 435

The Honorable
Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20501

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On behalf of the people of American Samoa, it is a great privilege to extend to you our warmest welcome. It is honor to have such a distinguished civil servant join us here in the territory. While your visit may be brief, we hope you experience a small taste of our hospitality and love for the United States.

American Samoa is a proud and loyal territory of the United States. We are especially proud that our U.S. Army Recruiting Station in Pago Pago has been ranked first in production out of the 885 Army recruiting stations and centers located throughout the world. Our strategic location in the South Pacific is just as vital to United States' interests today – with the ever increasing involvement of China in the Pacific region – as it was back in the early 1900s and during World War II, when American Samoa served as a critical refueling station and staging base for the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps operations in the Pacific.

We are enthusiastic about this administration's policy of putting America first. There are critical matters where American Samoa could benefit greatly from this plan. While there are many issues for which we need help, I kindly request your assistance on the following that are within the purview of the Department of State.

Tuna Industry of American Samoa

The tuna industry in American Samoa accounts for nearly 80% of our economy. In recent decades the industry has been comprised of two tuna canneries and the servicing of boats that deliver their catch for canning. The two canneries are, by far, the largest private sector employers in the Territory. Six months ago one of our vital canneries, Samoa Tuna Processors,

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suspended their canning operations indefinitely and 800 workers lost their employment. This was 5% of our total workforce and equated to a jump from 10% to 15% in the unemployment rate. The direct loss of jobs was just the beginning as fuel prices have gone up because boats supplying the cannery with fish no longer buy supplies from our stores and refuel in our port.

Lacking fish supply is a central reason for the suspension of canning. Unfortunately, federal policies are tied to the lacking fish supply and its negative impact on the tuna industry. The closure of rich fishing grounds, the creation of unnecessary monuments, the failure to utilize American Samoa's designation as a participating territory in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission ("WCPFC") and as a Small Island Developing State ("SIDS"), and other similar policies have all stifled the establishment of a sustainable tuna industry in American Samoa.

Special WCPFC Designation- Participating Territory/Small Island Developing State

In the WCPFC, members that have been designated as participating territories or small island states under the Convention are privy to special benefits including a greater number of fishing days for their fleets. American Samoa is a participating territory under the WCPFC and has also been designated as a SIDS by the United Nations. As such, American Samoa is allowed a greater number of fishing days. This is vital because fishing days are limited by NMFS and extremely expensive if purchased.

Unfortunately, while the WCPFC allows special treatment for American Samoa, NMFS has not granted all privileges available. In May of 2015, Tri-Marine, parent company to our local cannery Samoa Tuna Processors, petitioned NMFS to promulgate a rule that would exempt U.S. flagged purse seine vessels from any high seas fishing day limit if they deliver at least 50% of their catch to tuna processing facilities in American Samoa. It is now two years later, NMFS has yet to issue a final rule helping the U.S. purse seine vessels and in turn American Samoa.

US boats should be able to fish in the high seas. US boats must pay \$12,500 dollars a day to fish in the most lucrative waters in the South Pacific. The US fleet should have access to these free high seas fishing grounds, but unfortunately access is severely limited. This must change to help save our struggling industry and the Department of State can help in its negotiations at the WCPFC.

Mr. Secretary, our special status as a SIDS and Participating Territory must be utilized. While NMFS has not yet agreed to help our Territory with this issue, we urgently ask for help in pressing this issue so that our tuna industry survives and that we remain self-sufficient. We also ask that American Samoa be intimately involved in the WCPFC negotiations so that our interests and issues are addressed.

WCPFC Delegation Head

It is our understanding that the Department of State has not yet made a final decision on the new head of the US delegation to the WCPFC. I would recommend Mr. William Gibbons-Fly to lead the U.S. delegation. He is supremely capable and has shown, in his negotiations as the

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delegation head for the US in the South Pacific Tuna Treaty, that he is focused on putting the interests of the United States and American Samoa first. It appears that this has not been the case for quite some time in the WCPFC negotiations.

The WCPFC is crucial in setting the number of fishing days and fishing grounds for the US fleet. The availability of fishing grounds is crucial to the supply of tuna provided to our canneries. We need strength in these negotiations to support positions that will help the US tuna industry. Because of low costs and government subsidies in other countries, the US tuna industry is suffering. Please help turn this around as it is the economic lifeline of our territory.


National Monuments in the Pacific

Mr. Secretary, over thirty percent of US waters in the Pacific are closed to fishing because of National Monuments. The trend of closing areas to the US fishing fleet must be stopped and if possible reversed. While conservation is important it must be balanced with the economic needs of the Pacific Island Territories and Hawaii. If the US fishing industry is to survive in the Pacific, there must be ocean to fish.

President Trump has asked for a review of National Monuments. I will be submitting my comments to Secretary Zinke this week detailing the difficulties that national monuments create for the US tuna industry and American Samoa.

In April we were fortunate to host Mr. Vice President Pence. I also shared with him about some of these pressing issues. (please see attached) It has been a long time since we have received such distinguished visitors. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for taking time to review these important issues. For too long our Tuna Industry has suffered as the needs of others have been placed before those of Americans. I am encouraged that this will change under this new administration and with the help of your leadership. We wish you in your travels, and thank you for your service to the country and American Samoa.

Sincerely,


LOLO M. MOLIGA
Governor of American Samoa

Attach.

cc: Lieutenant Governor
Honorable Aumua Amata Radewagen