



181st Meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

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AMERICAN SAMOA LEGISLATIVE REPORT

1. AMERICAN SAMOA OCEAN PLAN

Congresswoman Aumua Amata Radewagen joined Representatives Don Young (Alaska), Jared Golden (Maine), and Seth Moulton (Massachusetts) in co-sponsoring H.R. 1240 – the Young Fishermen’s Development Act – legislation that would create a national grant program to support education, training and workplace development in fishing-related areas. The program will be carried out through the US Department of Commerce if passed and help to reverse the trend of the decline in young Americans in the states and territories entering the fishing industry.

Per a release from Congresswoman Amata’s office, the bill is modeled after the US Department of Agriculture’s Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program, and the four sponsoring representatives are hopeful that it will increase the participation of young Americans in fishing-related areas of employment. According to that release, the passing of this legislation would provide up to \$200,000 through NOAA’s Sea Grant Program for competitive awards to support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach and technical assistance for young fishers in fields such as seamanship, navigation, electronics, vessel safety, engine maintenance and repair, innovation in conservation fishing gear engineering and technology, entrepreneurship and good business practices.

The bipartisan bill was passed by the House Natural Resources Committee with unanimous consent in January this year. Through the Congresswoman’s release, she issued a statement on the proposed legislation. “Fishing is the lifeblood of our economy, and has always been part of the lives of islanders. This legislation would ensure that our young fishermen have the top training possible to succeed. This program can help prepare and equip young professional fishermen from the start for the best practices in an enduring career and way of life.”

2. EXTENSION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CREDIT

In December of last year, American Samoa's Congresswoman, Aumua Amata Radewagen, announced through her website that American Samoa's Economic Development Credit would be extended by Congress. The tax extender statute section 30(A) has been in place for American Samoa since 2006 to assist with job creation and economic stability. The credit will now be extended through January 2021, covering tax years 2018 to 2020.

This tax credit has also assisted StarKist in its efforts to compete against foreign processors to keep the cannery in American Samoa viable. The territory's economy is heavily dependent on the contributions from StarKist. In addition to the 2,400 jobs provided by the company, StarKist's heavy shipping needs and fuel consumption subsidize an estimated 40% of the territory's fuel and shipping costs, per a report provided to Council by the American Samoa Department of Commerce this past October. In addition to being the largest single employer in the private sector in American Samoa, StarKist also is the largest consumer of power and water, which provides a steady source of revenue to the local government for its operations.