



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. —

**PACIFIC ISLANDS SUMMIT RESOLUTION PASSES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BY 414 TO 1 VOTE**

Congressman Eni F.H. Faleomavaega announced that the U.S. House of Representatives has adopted legislation recognizing the importance of diplomatic relations with the Pacific Island nations and urging the President of the United States to convene a Summit meeting with the Pacific Island Heads of State.

Faleomavaega introduced the legislation, House Resolution 505 (H.Res. 505), in July, with the House International Relations Committee adopting the measure on September 10, 1998. The legislation holds that it is in the national interest of the United States to preserve strong and enduring economic, political and strategic ties with the Pacific Island nations, and the President should pursue a Summit meeting with Pacific Island leaders for those purposes.

Last night, in a near unanimous floor vote, the House of Representatives passed House Resolution 505 by a margin of 414 to 1.

"I am extremely elated by the strong showing of bi-partisan support for closer relations between the U.S. and the Pacific Island nations, that this vote represents," stated Congressman Faleomavaega. "While meeting with President Clinton in the White House a few months back, I raised the idea of a Pacific Islands Summit meeting at the East-West Center to advance diplomatic ties with Pacific Island leaders, to which the President expressed interest. Now, with the overwhelming adoption of H.Res. 505, the House of Representatives has emphatically reinforced to the President this recommendation of a Pacific Islands Summit. Moreover, in the Senate, the highly respected Senator Daniel K. Inouye, with whom I have been working closely, has introduced a companion measure, Senate Resolution 277, calling for the same objectives as H.Res. 505. I would hope these actions remind our friends in the Pacific Islands that they have not been forgotten, that they are important, and that the people of the United States greatly value their friendship and contributions," concluded Faleomavaega.

Following is the statement of Congressman Faleomavaega, who acted as Democratic floor manager for adoption of House Resolution 505:

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"Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 505, legislation I introduced in July to recognize the importance of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Pacific Island nations.

"I am deeply appreciative of the efforts of the Chairman and Ranking Democratic Member of the House International Relations Committee -- the gentleman from New York, Ben Gilman, and the gentleman from Indiana, Lee Hamilton -- for supporting H.Res. 505 as original co-sponsors, and for passage of the measure before the full committee.

"I would also thank the Chairman and Ranking Democratic Member of the International Relations Subcommittee on Asia-Pacific Affairs -- the gentleman from Nebraska, Doug Bereuter, and the gentleman from California, Howard Berman -- as well as our esteemed colleagues on the full committee -- Congressmen Chris Smith, Tom Lantos, and Alcee Hastings -- for joining us as original co-sponsors of House Resolution 505. My thanks also go to Representatives Patsy Mink, Robert Underwood, Neil Abercrombie, Robert Matsui and Jay Kim for their support of H.Res. 505.

"Mr. Speaker, the United States has had a long and extraordinarily deep relationship with our allies and friends in the Pacific Islands. One need only mention the names of Guadalcanal, Midway, Wake Island, Guam and Saipan to recall the critical battles waged in the Pacific during World War II. In that terrible conflict and during the Cold War, our Pacific Island allies have fought and worked alongside Americans to preserve peace and nurture democracy in the Pacific region.

"The people of the Marshall Islands, in particular, have made tremendous sacrifices which have greatly contributed to America's nuclear deterrence. During the 1940s and 1950s, the homelands of the Marshallese people were subjected to 67 U.S. nuclear tests, an ordeal from which they are still struggling to recover. The contributions of Pacific Islanders have truly enhanced America's security and stability.

"Today, a half-century later, Mr. Speaker, we should not forget our commitment to our friends in this part of the world. The Pacific Ocean covers one-third of the earth's surface and spanning it are the 7,500 islands which comprise the 22 Pacific Island nations and territories.

"While budgetary cutbacks have resulted in a reduced U.S. diplomatic presence in the region, our nation continues to have substantial interests in the Pacific -- whether that be in areas of investment and trade, strategic and regional security, democratic government and human rights, or protection of the environment.

"In particular, with the advent of the Law of the Sea Treaty and increasing international enforcement of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), the Pacific Island governments wield control over vast tracts of ocean. The millions of square miles of Pacific Ocean under the jurisdiction of Island nations encompass productive fisheries, undersea minerals, and important sea lanes -- increasingly vital assets in the future of the global economy.

"For example, Mr. Speaker, some of the world's richest and most diverse fishing grounds are found

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here, where the U.S. nets the bulk of tuna consumed by Americans. I would note that much of that tuna is processed in canneries located in my district, American Samoa. On the ocean floor by Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Tonga lie seabed mineral deposits and undersea nodules containing valuable minerals such as manganese, cobalt, nickel, copper, silver and gold. The EEZ waters of the sparsely-populated Cook Islands, alone, are projected to contain at least \$150 billion worth of seabed nodules.

"The lesson has not been lost on Asian nations that have invested in the region -- including China, South Korea and in particular Japan. Last October, then-Prime Minister Hashimoto hosted a Tokyo Summit meeting with Pacific Island Heads of State. No doubt, Japan is making a longterm investment, an economic investment for the 21st century.

"Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 505 sends the message that it is important for the United States to cultivate diplomatic relations today with the Pacific Island nations to foster strong economic ties tomorrow -- and that this will directly facilitate access to the region's valuable marine resources in the next millennium. For economic as well as strategic reasons, the United States should not permit others to step into the vacuum created by the lack of a strong U.S. policy and presence in the Pacific region.

"In furtherance of that goal, House Resolution 505 strongly urges that the President of the United States host a Summit meeting with the Pacific Island Heads of State and Government to improve diplomatic relations with the Pacific Island nations.

"Mr. Speaker, I would humbly suggest that the perfect opportunity to conduct the Pacific Islands Summit would be upon the President's return from the APEC meetings scheduled for November 1999 in Wellington, New Zealand. Since it is appropriate that the Summit meeting take place in the Pacific, the East-West Center in Hawaii provides the ideal forum. Since its formation in 1960, the East-West Center has been the region's most respected institution for furthering U.S. relations with the Asia-Pacific region.

"Before concluding, Mr. Speaker, I would note that an identical counterpart to H.Res. 505 has been introduced this month in the Senate by my good friend, the distinguished gentleman from Hawaii, Senator Daniel Inouye. Senator Inouye's measure, Senate Resolution 277, has been cosponsored by Senators Dan Akaka, Ted Stevens, Orrin Hatch, Robert Byrd, Craig Thomas, Ernest Hollings, William Roth, Wendell Ford, Barbara Boxer, Frank Murkowski and Jeff Sessions, and is before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I thank and commend Senator Inouye, who has long demonstrated commitment and unmatched leadership in the affairs of the Pacific region.

"Mr. Speaker, I would urge that our colleagues support adoption of House Resolution 505 as it is in the national interest of the United States that we preserve strong and enduring economic, political, and strategic ties with the Pacific Island nations.

"America cannot afford to neglect our friends in the Pacific. Adoption of this Resolution and the holding of a Pacific Islands Summit will ensure that we do not, and that our allies understand that the United States intends to remain firmly engaged in the Pacific region for our mutual benefit. Mr. Speaker, I would urge passage of House Resolution 505."