

**CLOSING STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN
CHAIRWOMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON INSULAR AFFAIRS
OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES
OF THE INTERAGENCY GROUP ON INSULAR AREAS
July 17, 2008**

I want to thank our witnesses for their testimony this afternoon on the Interagency Group on Insular Areas. Their personal experiences and expertise from the standpoints of how the IGIA operates internally has helped us to better understand where flaws exist.

In the past year and a half, this Subcommittee has held hearings on a number of issues important to our fellow Americans residing in American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and my home, the U.S. Virgin Islands. Some of our work resulted in the House considering and passing legislation addressing outstanding war claims, the construction of schools, the repeal of taxes, financial accountability, and the extension of U.S. immigration laws.

Our hearings have also built upon previous Congressional efforts to resolve political status for our

largest territory of Puerto Rico and to understand the challenges faced by U.S. territories in financial management, accountability, implementing alternative energy, diversifying economies, and raising the standards of living.

I am certain that we can all agree that because of the territories' unique status within the American family, there is a special obligation resting with the Federal government to resolve issues and make policy recommendations reflecting the islands' distinct circumstance. This responsibility holds true for both unresolved problems of the past and challenges in the near future.

The differences between IGIA attitudes of the Clinton and Bush Administrations are clear and speak to the insular legacies one President has left behind and the others soon to come. The Subcommittee is interested in building upon the lessons learned from two very different approaches to leadership. And what is clear to me, is that the Federal government should at the very least provide continuity for a

group which can have a very serious impact for Americans residing in U.S. territories.

In the near future, we hope to collaborate with you and other island leaders in putting together something which would offer the kind of continuity and reliability needed to move these islands forward.

Again, I thank the witnesses and the Member of the Subcommittee.