

11/01/09

Hon. Nick Joe Rahall II, Chairman  
Hon. Doc Hastings, Ranking Member  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Rahall and Ranking Member Hastings:

I am writing today as the managing owner of C & F Fishing, LTD in support of the American Samoa Protection of Industry, Resources, and Employment Act (ASPIRE Act), which is currently before the US House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources. I have worked out of American Samoa for about 25 years. The first ten years there, I was a fish captain and master of my own tuna fishing boat. Afterwards, I went into the management side of fishing.

Recently, I was with my fishing vessel JEANETTE, for 10 weeks while it was in the shipyard in American Samoa for maintenance and repairs. My wife, crew and I were very lucky to have gotten our ship down from dry dock 14 hours before the earthquake and tsunami hit.

Since we spend a lot of time in American Samoa I feel we have a unique interest in this legislation. The islanders of American Samoa are proud, patriotic, loyal and hardworking. After the tsunami they all worked together to clean up and put their island back together. They need the canneries to stay in order to support their families and earn a living. They serve our country by serving in the Armed Forces. In the Middle East, twelve American Samoans have made the ultimate sacrifice.

American Samoa needs ASPIRE for survival. Fishing vessels similar to mine that direct deliver to American Samoa have an economic multiplier benefit effect on the island's revenue. Additional revenue for American Samoa comes from what we spend on vessel fuel, lubes, gas oil products, provisions, repairs,

and other shipyard services; unloading costs; fishing net repairs; hotels and dining. We attend and support churches and charitable functions. Without the canneries none of this will happen.

The StarKist cannery in American Samoa has reduced the amount they are processing and Chicken of the Sea has left American Samoa entirely because of the world competition for lower wages. If we lose the ability to sell tuna in American Samoa, we would be losing the last US delivery of whole fish caught, produced, and delivered. StarKist is the only place in the United States that produces a can of tuna from whole fish.

I agree with most of the ASPIRE bill as written but there are occasions in which you do not have a choice in where you unload nor can you predict how much fish you are going to catch in a year. US tuna vessels that have been unloading in American Samoa for the past 25 years can no longer do so with the closing of Chicken of the Sea. This is beyond their control. My vessel unloads for the remaining cannery StarKist. But this could have been anyone of us. There are years, when fishing is slow and a vessel will not reach the mandatory 3 trips to unload in American Samoa. For this reason we would like to work with Congress and American Samoa leaders to address the \$250,000 and 6.25% penalty fees noted in the bill.

I would like to thank you for giving me the time to voice my opinions and concerns about ASPIRE. I look forward to a bill that can help keep the United States tuna industry competitive with the world and by doing so retain the needed jobs for the people and families of American Samoa

Sincerely,



Jose F. S. Finete

President, C & F Fishing