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November 2, 2009

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 a business owner in American Samoa in support of the American Samoa Protection of Industries Resources and Employment Act, which is currently before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources.

I have reviewed ASPIRE, and I understand that this proposal will increase direct delivery of fish to American Samoa and will lead to tuna processors maintaining a presence on the island.

I represent the MYD Samoa Company. Throughout my organization's history, the tuna processors and ships operating in a tuna boats coming to American Samoa have been my primary source of revenue. It is fair to say some 80% of my company's profit is directly dependant on the tuna processors and vessels. In fact, I have personally seen a decline in business due to the closure of the Chicken of the Sea facility.

I fear what will happen to my business if Star Kist leaves as well. Specifically, the costs of operating my business – utilities such as energy, water, etc. can only be expected to skyrocket with the inflationary pressure that will accompany the departure of the fishing industry.

The added difficulty of recovering from the recent tsunami has put my business, and in fact American Samoa in general, in an especially unstable position. As an American Samoan business owner, and an American Samoan citizen, I urge you to ensure ASPIRE becomes law.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peni Ben Solaita', is written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Mr. Peni Ben Solaita
President/Owner