October 30, 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 businessperson 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.

This bill is essential to the economic survival of our fishing industry, to the future of any perspective fisheries economic growth efforts, and especially to our people who simply want to earn a living. We used to have 75% of the fish from our US Tuna Treaties landed in American Samoa and we now only have 45% of this fish catch- and less in future years without the passage of this bill. The difference is currently going to non US flag countries.
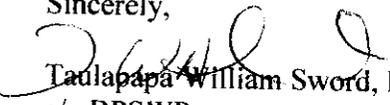
I represent myself in this letter but if given more time to respond, I am sure my company would support this bill. I will attest that throughout my organization's history, the tuna processors operating in and the tuna boats coming to American Samoa have been our primary source of revenue – from marine fuel sales, and power plant fuel sales. It is fair to say some 60 percent of my company's profit is directly dependant on the tuna processors and vessels. We have experienced about a 25 percent decline in business due to the closure of the Chicken of the Sea facility.

If Star Kist leaves as well we are economically doomed. I can guaranty that our firm will have to layoff people and our services will decline given the departure of the fishing industry.

The recent tsunami has put our business, and in fact American Samoa in general, in an especially unstable position. As an American Samoan business manager, and an American Samoan citizen, I urge you to ensure ASPIRE becomes law.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Tadlapapa William Sword, P.E., MSCE
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