

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 10206

To support the strengthening of civil society organizations in the Pacific Islands, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 21, 2024

Mr. CASE (for himself, Mr. MOYLAN, Ms. PORTER, Ms. TITUS, Ms. TOKUDA, Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY, Mrs. RADEWAGEN, Mr. SABLAN, Mr. SHERMAN, Mr. NORCROSS, Mr. GOTTHEIMER, and Mr. VARGAS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To support the strengthening of civil society organizations in the Pacific Islands, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Engage the Pacific
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

7 It is the sense of Congress that—

1 (1) in the Pacific Islands region, civil society
2 organizations are critical components of overall cohe-
3 sion and support;

4 (2) in pursuit of a Pacific-led approach to re-
5 gional assistance, it is critical that the United States
6 engage with and support the strengthening of civil
7 society organizations in the Pacific Islands region,
8 including faith-based organizations, environmental
9 organizations, educational organizations, and media
10 organizations;

11 (3) in order to maximize the effectiveness of
12 United States engagement in and support of the Pa-
13 cific Islands region, the United States must ensure
14 the dissemination of information both generally and
15 through civil society organizations;

16 (4) in order to support a free and open Indo-
17 Pacific, it is necessary to “bolster freedom of infor-
18 mation and expression and combat foreign inter-
19 ference by supporting investigative journalism, pro-
20 moting media literacy and pluralistic and inde-
21 pendent media, and increasing collaboration to ad-
22 dress threats from information manipulation”, as
23 the White House 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy states;

24 (5) as stated in the statement released after the
25 2024 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting, “the

1 United States is committed to working with Pacific
2 Island countries’ governments, likeminded partners,
3 and the private sector to empower and support Pa-
4 cific economic resilience’’, and one avenue to achieve
5 such goals is for the United States to support capac-
6 ity by Pacific Island countries’ workforces to maxi-
7 mize the benefits of national investment and busi-
8 ness opportunities; and

9 (6) American Spaces, a program of the Depart-
10 ment of State, including American Corners and
11 American Centers, contribute to local society and
12 boost United States presence in the region by facili-
13 tating United States engagement in collaboration
14 with civil society organizations where residents can
15 learn about the United States, engage in English
16 language learning opportunities, learn about oppor-
17 tunities to study in the United States, and engage
18 in various in-person and virtual programming, which
19 facilitates the relationship between the United States
20 and the Pacific Islands.

21 **SEC. 3. COMMITTEE ON ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY**
22 **ORGANIZATIONS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.**

23 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of State, in co-
24 ordination with the Administrator of the United States
25 Agency for International Development and the Secretary

1 of Defense, shall establish a committee, to be known as
2 the “Committee on Engagement with Civil Society Organi-
3 zations in the Pacific Islands” (referred to in this sub-
4 section as the “Committee”) for the purposes of—

5 (1) coordinating interagency engagement with
6 civil society organizations in the Pacific Islands;

7 (2) coordinating collaboration with United
8 States partners and allies on engagement with civil
9 society organizations in the Pacific Islands; and

10 (3) aligning such engagement with the needs of
11 the Pacific Islands and the national security prior-
12 ities of the United States.

13 (b) STRATEGY.—Not later than 180 days after the
14 date of the enactment of this Act, the Committee shall
15 submit to the appropriate congressional committees a
16 strategy on engagement with civil society organizations in
17 the Pacific Islands, including—

18 (1) a review of current efforts across the United
19 States Government to engage with such organiza-
20 tions, including the role of such efforts in the deliv-
21 ery of foreign aid to communities;

22 (2) a plan for engagement across the United
23 States Government with such organizations;

24 (3) an assessment of the importance of engage-
25 ment by the United States with such organizations

1 and how such engagement aligns with the advance-
2 ment of Indo-Pacific and Pacific Islands priorities
3 within the National Security Strategy, Indo-Pacific
4 Strategy, and Pacific Partnership Strategy;

5 (4) an analysis of interagency cooperation re-
6 garding United States engagement with such organi-
7 zations and specific recommendations for expansion
8 and improvement of such cooperation;

9 (5) an analysis of the resources needed to bol-
10 ster and streamline United States engagement with
11 such organizations, including any additional statu-
12 tory authorities or appropriations of funds;

13 (6) an analysis of any engagement conducted by
14 a country other than the United States with such or-
15 ganizations, including engagement that may under-
16 mine civil society in the Pacific Islands; and

17 (7) an assessment of opportunities for greater
18 coordination between the United States and like-
19 minded partners and allies.

20 **SEC. 4. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS IN THE PACIFIC IS-**
21 **LANDS.**

22 Not later than 180 days after the date of the enact-
23 ment of this Act, the Secretary, in consultation with the
24 Administrator of the United States Agency for Inter-
25 national Development and the Secretary of Defense, shall

1 submit to the appropriate congressional committees a
2 strategy for strategic communications in the Pacific Is-
3 lands, including—

4 (1) a review of such communications, including
5 United States interagency and multilateral efforts
6 with like-minded partners;

7 (2) an assessment of the resources being used
8 for such communications, including the number of
9 staff devoted to such communications, the location
10 of such staff, and the funds appropriated for such
11 communications;

12 (3) an assessment of any additional resources
13 needed for such communications;

14 (4) an assessment of how United States engage-
15 ment is being perceived in the Pacific Islands and
16 how such perception might be improved;

17 (5) an assessment of how engagement by other
18 actors is being perceived in the Pacific Islands; and

19 (6) specific recommendations for the expansion
20 and improvement of such communications.

21 **SEC. 5. INDO-PACIFIC MEDIA ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM.**

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State shall con-
23 tinue to implement and develop the Indo-Pacific Media
24 Advancement Program to promote a robust, free media
25 in the Pacific Islands and strengthen the capacity of

1 media outlets and journalists in the Indo-Pacific region
2 to develop their business strategies, enhance their ability
3 to conduct independent journalism, and counter
4 disinformation.

5 (b) GOALS.—The goals of the Indo-Pacific Media Ad-
6 vancement Program shall be to accomplish the following:

7 (1) Increase the understanding of prevalent
8 misinformation and disinformation narratives.

9 (2) Develop the capacity of professional, inde-
10 pendent media organizations and journalists to de-
11 velop and implement media sustainability plans, im-
12 prove business operations, and increase the quality
13 and quantity of published information and news.

14 (3) Expand media outlets' access to resources,
15 content-sharing agreements, and equipment, so that
16 such outlets can provide quality content.

17 (4) Develop the technical and investigative
18 skills of journalists to conduct pre-bunking, fact-
19 checking, and debunking to address misinformation
20 and disinformation.

21 (c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date
22 of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State, in
23 coordination with the heads of other Federal departments
24 or agencies, as appropriate, shall submit to the appro-
25 priate congressional committees a report on the Indo-Pa-

1 cific Media Advancement Program and the engagement of
2 the United States with the free media in the Pacific Is-
3 lands, including the following:

4 (1) An overview of the media and journalism
5 landscape in the Pacific Islands.

6 (2) A review of the efforts and planned efforts
7 of the United States Government to strengthen free
8 and independent media in the Pacific Islands, in-
9 cluding a description of the objectives, means of im-
10 plementation, and measures of success of the Indo-
11 Pacific Media Advancement Program.

12 (3) An assessment of challenges to a free and
13 open media in the Pacific Islands and to the imple-
14 mentation of the Indo-Pacific Media Advancement
15 Program, including strategies to mitigate such chal-
16 lenges.

17 (4) An assessment of any additional authorities
18 or resources necessary for more robust United
19 States engagement to promote a free media in the
20 Pacific Islands and greater implementation of the
21 Indo-Pacific Media Advancement Program.

22 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
23 are authorized to be appropriated \$4,000,000 for each of
24 the fiscal years 2026 through 2030 to carry out this sec-
25 tion.

1 **SEC. 6. PACIFIC ISLANDS TRADES PROGRAM.**

2 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Administrator of the
3 United States Agency for International Development shall
4 establish a program, to be known as the “Pacific Islands
5 Training and Resources for Advancement in Development,
6 Education, and Skills Program” or the “Pacific Islands
7 TRADES Program”, to, through scholarships, training
8 from such agency, and grants to partner organizations,
9 assist with workforce development in the Pacific Islands
10 to—

11 (1) increase the capacity of the local workforce
12 through medium- and long-term training and tech-
13 nical assistance in sectors of critical importance to
14 the Pacific Islands, such as construction, tourism,
15 boat maintenance, and fisheries;

16 (2) balance maximizing workforce retention in
17 the Pacific Islands with any necessary training out-
18 side of the Pacific Islands, with a focus on avoiding
19 exacerbating outward labor flows;

20 (3) keep Pacific priorities in mind by coordi-
21 nating with like-minded allies and partners and
22 working with local organizations and governments;
23 and

24 (4) provide resources for technical and manage-
25 ment skills development to adequately prepare the

1 workforce of the Pacific Islands for any potential in-
2 coming investment.

3 (b) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date
4 of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall sub-
5 mit to the appropriate congressional committees a report
6 on the Pacific Islands TRADES Program, including the
7 following:

8 (1) A comprehensive overview of such program.

9 (2) An identification of the office overseeing
10 such program.

11 (3) A list of any partner organizations involved
12 in such program.

13 (4) A description of the training and workforce
14 development planned as part of such program.

15 (5) An assessment of the impact of such pro-
16 gram.

17 (6) Any additional resources needed to imple-
18 ment such program.

19 (c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
20 are authorized to be appropriated \$10,000,000 for each
21 of the fiscal years 2026 through 2030 to carry out this
22 section.

23 **SEC. 7. AMERICAN SPACES IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.**

24 Not later than 180 days after the enactment of this
25 Act, the Secretary of State shall develop and submit to

1 the appropriate congressional committees a report on the
2 state of and plans for American Spaces in the Pacific Is-
3 lands, including—

4 (1) an overview of American Spaces in the Pa-
5 cific Islands (including American Corners and Amer-
6 ican Centers), including an assessment of the cur-
7 rent and historical programming and resources of
8 American Spaces;

9 (2) a plan for future American Spaces in Pa-
10 cific Island countries, including any new develop-
11 ment or expansion of existing American Spaces, and
12 a description of any additional resources needed for
13 such expansion; and

14 (3) an assessment of the impact of American
15 Spaces on American foreign policy and national se-
16 curity interests, including in comparison to the simi-
17 lar initiatives of other actors.

18 **SEC. 8. DEFINITIONS.**

19 In this Act:

20 (1) **AMERICAN SPACES.**—The term “American
21 Spaces” means public diplomacy facilities operated
22 or supported by the Department of State that pro-
23 vide digitally enhanced physical platforms for effec-
24 tive engagement with foreign audiences in support of
25 the foreign policy objectives of the United States.

1 (2) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
2 TEES.—The term “appropriate congressional com-
3 mittees” means the Committee on Foreign Affairs
4 and the Committee on Appropriations of the House
5 of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign
6 Relations and the Committee on Appropriations of
7 the Senate.

8 (3) CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION.—The term
9 “civil society organization” means a non-govern-
10 mental community organization, including any faith-
11 based organization, media organization, environ-
12 mental organization, and educational organization.

13 (3) PACIFIC ISLANDS.—The term “Pacific Is-
14 lands” means the following:

15 (A) Niue.

16 (B) The Cook Islands.

17 (C) The Federated States of Micronesia.

18 (D) The Independent State of Papua New
19 Guinea.

20 (E) The Independent State of Samoa.

21 (F) The Kingdom of Tonga.

22 (G) The Republic of Fiji.

23 (H) The Republic of Kiribati.

24 (I) The Republic of the Marshall Islands.

25 (J) The Republic of Nauru.

- 1 (K) The Republic of Palau.
- 2 (L) The Republic of Vanuatu.
- 3 (M) The Solomon Islands.
- 4 (N) Tuvalu.

