

HISTORICAL RECORD OF
FALEOMAVEGA'S RESPONSE TO
CLOSURE OF SAMOA PACKING IN
AMERICAN SAMOA

HON. ENI F.H. FALEOMAVEGA

OF AMERICAN SAMOA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 3, 2014

Mr. FALEOMAVEGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to include, for historical purposes, information on the closure of Samoa Packing in American Samoa.

[Press Release, May 7, 2009]

FALEOMAVEGA INFORMS GOVERNOR THAT MINIMUM WAGE IS NOT THE REASON FOR SAMOA PACKING RELOCATING TO GEORGIA

Congressman Faleomavaega announced today that, in a letter dated May 7, 2009 and in response to Governor Togiola's letter of May 1, he has informed the Governor that minimum wage is not the reason for Samoa Packing relocating to Georgia. The full text of the Congressman's letter, which was copied to the President and Senators, and the Speaker and Representatives, is included below.

"Dear Governor Togiola:

I am writing in response to the recent announcement by Chicken of the Sea/Samoa Packing that it will close operations in American Samoa effective September of this year. I am also writing in response to your letter of May 1, 2009. Enclosed for your information is a copy of my letter of May 7 to Senator Daniel K. Inouye, Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, which explains my position regarding the plant's closure, and my request for his assistance.

While you have suggested that the cannery is leaving due to minimum wage increases, the company has made it clear that minimum wage is only one of many reasons that influenced its decision and, frankly speaking, I believe minimum wage was the least of its reasons, especially considering that the company is relocating to Lyons, Georgia where effective July 24, 2009, minimum wage rates are \$7.25 per hour, compared to American Samoa's current rate of \$4.26 and American Samoa's projected rate of \$4.76 per hour effective July 2009.

That Chicken of the Sea would relocate and immediately pay workers in Georgia double the moneys is not fair to our Samoan workers who spent the last 50 years making Chicken of the Sea one of the most profitable brands of canned tuna in America. It is also not fair that our cannery workers have been paid way below the national average when the vast majority of ASG workers have salaries comparable to national minimum wage standards.

If it is possible to increase salaries of departments by as much as \$10,000, why would ASG leaders not support an increase of 50-cents per hour for private sector tuna cannery workers? Regardless of what your position is about the poorest among us, now is not the time to be pointing fingers. We need to work together to find a solution, and my office has already had discussions with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL).

Enclosed for your information is a point of contact to assist you with ASG's application for national emergency funds to provide job training for our workers. According to the DOL, the request for this assistance must be made by you, and must originate from the Governor's office. Your staff may contact Adri Jayaratne at jayaratne.adri@dol.gov for further information on how to apply for a national emergency grant. This information may also be accessed at [http://](http://www.doleta.gov/neg/eligibility.cfm)

www.doleta.gov/neg/eligibility.cfm. I will send a letter of support to the U.S. Secretary of Labor prior to the submission of ASG's application.

However, before any action can be taken by Congress or the DOL, I have been informed that ASG will need to provide the DOL and Congress with documentation showing the legal status of our cannery workers. Samoa Packing's current workforce consists of 2,172 active employees of which 274, or 13%, are American Samoans, 87%, or 1,821 workers are Western Samoans, and 3.5%, or 77 employees, are other foreign nationals. The total payroll for all workers for the cannery including benefits annually is approximately \$22-\$23 million.

I have been informed that ASG will have to certify the legal status of our workers at Chicken of the Sea/Samoa Packing before we can expect federal assistance. Even though most of our tuna cannery workers are from Western Samoa, many of them are married to U.S. nationals and U.S. citizens and, for purposes of helping these families, I am hopeful that you will send me the necessary immigration documentation showing that these workers do have legal status so that we may move forward with assisting them.

I am also hopeful that ASG will inform my office of what kind of trust fund is in place for our local workers in the case of unemployment. As you know, after all these years, ASG has chosen not to participate in the federal Unemployment Insurance (UI) program. Under terms of the UI program, when eligible workers lose their jobs, the UI program may provide them with income support for 6 months based on certain calculations. These unemployment benefits are paid out of a federal trust fund. However, the money for the trust fund comes from taxes States impose on employers.

The State of Hawaii, for example, has protected its workers by taxing employers like Hawaiian Air. The State of Hawaii then sends a portion of those taxes to the federal government to hold in trust for workers who may become unemployed should Hawaiian Air lay off some of its workers. Once a worker is laid off, that worker can apply for unemployment benefits and the federal government will send that worker a check from the trust fund.

When workers in American Samoa get laid off, they are not eligible for UI benefits because ASG has not sent any money to the federal government to hold in trust for our local workers. Since ASG chose not to have the federal government hold money in trust, I am hopeful that ASG has held those funds in trust at the local level from the taxes it has collected from StarKist and Chicken of the Sea so that our workers can seek immediate relief and unemployment checks come September. In the case of layoffs or closures, unemployment compensation should have been at the heart of ASG's lease agreements with the canneries.

If ASG has no local trust fund in place, I would hope that ASG would support my efforts to bring ASG under the federal umbrella. My office has contacted the House Ways and Means Committee and I have every intention of working closely with Chairman Charles Rangel to devise a program that will require ASG to set aside a portion of the taxes it collects either in a local or federal trust fund so that future workers will be protected in the case of layoffs or plant closures. Like every American, our workers deserve protection, and they are entitled to peace of mind in knowing that their local government reserved a portion of taxes for them, in case of their unemployment. Every State plus Puerto Rico, DC, and the Virgin Islands provide their workers with this kind of safety net, and Guam established a modi-

fied program. It is time for ASG to follow suit, if it has not done so already.

While I am seeking a \$20 million emergency set aside in the supplemental appropriations bill, and while I will also ask to increase operations and CIP funding for ASG, I am not sure how successful federal efforts might be, especially given our tuna canneries were recently provided with a \$33 million federal income tax break at a time when the United States is faced with an unprecedented financial crisis. Prior to this extension, each cannery received over \$5 million per year in federal tax breaks for almost 20 years, which equates to well over \$200 million, not to mention the tax breaks they got for the 20 or so years preceding this.

Also, in 1999, at cost of \$600,000 from the U.S. Congress, a U.S. Department of the Interior Secretarial Commission was established to examine American Samoa's economic condition and make recommendations to ASG and the Department of the Interior on how to diversify and expand American Samoa's economy. This was the first time in American Samoa's 100-year relationship with the United States that a Secretarial Commission was established.

This Secretarial Commission was supported by Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, chaired by the former Governor of Hawaii John Waihee, and administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior. You served as a commission member. I served as an ex officio member.

In conjunction with the people of American Samoa, the Commission, over about a two-year time period, developed an economic plan which offered specific recommendations on how to diversify the Territory's local economy based on the will of the people. In fact, over 8,000 people were surveyed at the request of the Commission by the American Samoa Community College. In April 2002, the Secretarial Commission issued its final report. To date, the U.S. Department of the Interior has failed to move forward on this plan and I must say our local government officials also have not acted.

I will continue to update you regarding my efforts at the federal level, and I look forward to working with you and the Pono to discuss possible options and new steps forward.

The Congressman concluded his letter by stating, "Next week, I will be meeting with Bumble Bee's top executive, Mr. Chris Lischewski, and I will keep you apprised of his insights and interests in American Samoa. Until then, I continue to wish you the very best."

[Press Release, June 19, 2009]

FALEOMAVEGA CALLS FOR COOPERATION NOT CONFRONTATION

Congressman Faleomavaega announced today that he is calling for cooperation not confrontation in response to Samoa Packing's closing.

"At a time when our Territory is faced with the challenges caused by the collapse of the global economy which has also impacted our local businesses, including Samoa Packing, I believe it is very important for our leaders to pull together and do what is right for our people, rather than waste time engaged in personal attacks. For this reason, I will not respond to the negative comments being made on radio and in the press, but I will continue to provide information which is important for the public to know."

"First and foremost, since the day Chicken of the Sea announced it would be closing its operations, my office has been aggressively working to find solutions at the federal level that would complement local efforts. In fact, it was my office, not ASG, that first contacted the U.S. Department of Labor on behalf of our cannery workers to make sure

they could be provided with a stipend and an opportunity to be re-trained or to attend ASCC."

"In a letter dated May 7, 2009, I informed the Governor of this opportunity and stated that national emergency grant (NEG) funds would be made available if he would submit the necessary application. I also provided the Governor with names and email addresses of contacts at the U.S. Department of Labor who could assist him in this effort."

"On May 7, I wrote to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar to make him aware of our situation and request his support. On May 8, I wrote to Senator Daniel Inouye, Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and Chairman David Obey of the House Committee on Appropriations, requesting \$20 million in emergency aid which they were unable to provide in the supplemental, although I am hopeful that they will be able to set aside some funds at a later date."

"On May 14, I held a meeting in my office with officials from the Employment Training Agency at the U.S. Department of Labor, and followed up with a letter on the same day personally thanking Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis for working closely with my office since May 7, 2009 to find real solutions for American Samoa's cannery workers. In a letter dated June 10, 2009 and received in my office on June 17, the DOL thanked me for my letter and stated the following: 'The DOL's San Francisco Regional Office has been providing technical assistance to American Samoa on how to submit a NEG application; however, American Samoa has not submitted a NEG application as of yet.'"

The DOL also stated: 'I can assure you than once the application is submitted, it will be afforded every consideration, and your office and the Governor will be notified as soon as a decision has been made.'

"Regarding the minimum wage issue, it was my office that contacted Chairman Miller and asked for a delay in minimum wage increases, and it was my office that informed Senator Inouye that Chairman Miller and Chairman Kennedy had agreed to my request for the delay of the fourth increase until their Committees have a chance to review the GAO report due in April 2010."

"Unfortunately, the Governor issued a press release last week stating that Congress was not supportive of the delay, and both Chairman Miller and Senator Kennedy's staff went on record to state that this was not true. Both Chairman Miller and Chairman Kennedy are supportive of a delay and Senator Inouye's office informed my office that he will be working to include our language in the FY2010 Appropriations bill."

"Also, as a matter of fact, I opposed automatic increases in minimum wage and from the outset have been united with ASG officials in calling for an end to automatic increases."

"Finally, while I do not know what ASG is doing to keep StarKist in American Samoa or to buy back the cannery from Samoa Packing at a nominal fee in order to attract other investors to set up tuna canning operations, my office has been in discussions with StarKist, Bumble Bee, Taiwan, China, and the Philippines, and I have every intention of continuing discussions until we find a solution to provide employment for our workers."

"While it would have been best if ASG had prepared for this day and diversified its economy and acted on the recommendations of the American Samoa Economic Advisory Commission some seven years ago, what matters most is how ASG now responds to Samoa Packing's departure."

"This is why my door will continue to remain open to the Governor and our Fono leaders, no matter what, and this is why I

will also clarify the record every step of the way. In response to the Governor's most recent statements to the press, he stated that I said I was not aware that he was in Washington. To be clear, what I said was that I was unaware of who the Governor was meeting with while he was in Washington."

"As a matter of record, it was Senator Inouye, not the Governor, who informed me that the two had met. The only information I received from the Governor was through his consultant who left a voicemail with my staff stating that if I wanted to meet with the Governor, to call and let her know. My office returned the call and set up a time to meet with the Governor at which time I invited Chairman Miller's senior staff and Nik Pula of the OIA to meet with us, and I thought we had an excellent meeting in my office."

"Hopefully, we will continue to move forward in a positive manner and, with the support and prayers of our people, I remain optimistic that American Samoa will come through this stronger and better than before."

"As a final point, I also want to correct the record regarding Bumble Bee. Up until November of last year, Bumble Bee was Canadian owned until the U.S. management team partnered with U.S. Centre Partners to buy the company and take it private," Faleomavaega concluded.

ALZHEIMER'S

HON. MAXINE WATERS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 3, 2014

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from California, Congressman JOHN GARAMENDI, for the time, and I congratulate him for organizing this evening's Special Order Hour on Alzheimer's Disease.

As the Co-Chair of the Congressional Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease, I know how devastating this disease can be on patients, families, and caregivers. The Task Force works on a bipartisan basis to increase awareness of Alzheimer's, strengthen the federal commitment to improving the lives of those affected by the disease, and assist the caregivers who provide their needed support.

Alzheimer's disease in the U.S. is at crisis proportions. As our population ages, the number of persons affected by this brain disorder are expected to triple by 2050. The costs associated with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia are also growing at an unsustainable rate. A recent RAND study of adults ages 70 and older found that the total economic cost of dementia in 2010 was estimated to be \$109 billion for direct care alone. That is higher than the cost of both heart disease and cancer. Furthermore, the economic cost of dementia rises to \$159 billion to \$215 billion when the cost of informal care is included.

In the U.S., someone develops Alzheimer's every 67 seconds. According to recent data, women have a 1 in 6 estimated lifetime risk of developing the disease at age 65, while the risk for men is nearly 1 in 11. The Alzheimer's Association estimates as many as 16 million Americans over age 65 could suffer from Alzheimer's by 2050. It is now the fifth leading cause of death in my home state of California.

Alzheimer's has a devastating impact upon families. Right now nearly 15 million people,

mostly family members, provide unpaid care for individuals with Alzheimer's or dementia, a market value of more than \$220.2 billion. In California alone, about 1.5 million unpaid caregivers grapple with the tremendous challenges of Alzheimer's disease or dementia every day. Caregivers include spouses, children, and even grandchildren. As compared to caregivers for other diseases, Alzheimer's caregivers disproportionately report being forced to miss work, reduce work hours, quit their jobs, or change jobs due to caregiving demands. They are more likely to experience financial hardship, report health difficulties, experience emotional stress and suffer from sleep disturbance.

The bipartisan supported National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease calls for a cure or an effective treatment for Alzheimer's by 2025. In an effort to meet this goal, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education approved a budget for fiscal year 2015 that calls for an additional \$100 million in funding for the National Institute on Aging (NIA) to expand Alzheimer's disease research. NIA, along with other institutes at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), are supporting a number of promising Alzheimer's disease research projects, including cutting-edge "prevention" trials that are studying whether or not the disease can be prevented or slowed substantially by administering treatments earlier in the disease process.

I am urging the leaders of the House Appropriations Committee to include at least the additional \$100 million for the NIA in the final budget package for FY 2015. This modest increase in Alzheimer's research funding will provide vital resources to support meritorious Alzheimer's disease research projects. This action will also demonstrate further resolve in support of our national priority of eradicating this insidious brain disorder.

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education also included language directing NIH to submit a professional judgment budget for Alzheimer's disease research. As a cosponsor of the Alzheimer's Accountability Act (H.R. 4351), I believe that unfiltered information specifying the resources necessary to meet the goals and objectives laid out in the National Plan would provide Congress with a valuable tool for setting research and service priorities.

I also plan to urge the President to include robust funding for Alzheimer's research and caregiver support services in his fiscal year 2016 budget, which the President will be submitting to Congress early next year. Increased funding for Alzheimer's programs will allow us to meet these challenges head on and enhance our chances of meeting the goals articulated in the National Plan.

As we continue to search for a cure, our nation is at a critical crossroads that requires decisive action to assure the safety and welfare of the millions of Americans with Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Together, let us commit to take every possible action to improve treatments for Alzheimer's patients, support caregivers, and invest in research to find a cure for this disease.

Once again, I thank my colleague from California for organizing tonight's Special Order.