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**SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 8017**

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**State of Washington**

**66th Legislature**

**2020 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Hasegawa, Hunt, Billig, Saldaña, Stanford, and Wilson, C.

Read first time 01/15/20. Referred to Committee on State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections.

1 TO THE HONORABLE DONALD J. TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,  
2 AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF  
3 REPRESENTATIVES, AND TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF  
4 THE UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED:

5 We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of  
6 the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled,  
7 respectfully represent and petition as follows:

8 WHEREAS, Since 1986, Compacts of Free Association (COFA) between  
9 the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, the  
10 Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Yap, Pohnpei), and the  
11 United States allow COFA citizens to serve in the United States  
12 military and enter, lawfully reside, and work in the United States;  
13 and

14 WHEREAS, The relationship between the nations with Compacts of  
15 Free Association and the United States includes economic development  
16 and a military presence; and

17 WHEREAS, The region served as a testing ground for atmospheric  
18 nuclear weapons between 1946 and 1958, which resulted in past and  
19 current inhabitants being exposed to high levels of radioactive  
20 fallout; and

21 WHEREAS, When the Compacts were originally signed, COFA migrants  
22 were eligible for Medicaid and other federal programs; and

1       WHEREAS, Despite paying state and federal taxes, these migrants  
2 were excluded from benefits as a consequence of the federal Personal  
3 Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act in 1996; and

4       WHEREAS, This ineligibility for federal health programs has  
5 exacerbated barriers to health care access for this population, which  
6 has led to poorer health outcomes and increased, long-term costs on  
7 the health care system as a whole; and

8       WHEREAS, Research shows that people living in households in which  
9 the primary language spoken at home is not English, seniors, people  
10 with disabilities, and people who identify as Native Hawaiian or  
11 Pacific Islanders are disproportionately impacted by health  
12 inequities; and

13       WHEREAS, Washington state has the second-largest population of  
14 Kosraeans and the third-largest population of Palauans and  
15 Marshallese people in the United States according to the 2010 United  
16 States Census; and

17       WHEREAS, Washington recognized the need to help address health  
18 inequities by providing support for COFA citizens in need of food,  
19 medical, and dental care assistance in Washington state; and

20       WHEREAS, Washington state continues to advocate, alongside other  
21 states, for congressional legislation to restore federal benefits for  
22 COFA communities who continue to provide military service at higher  
23 rates than the overall population of the United States and valuable  
24 economic and cultural contributions in the United States; and

25       WHEREAS, The COFA communities in Washington are engaged in  
26 providing feedback regarding COFA renewal and participated in  
27 listening sessions as part of the recent United States Government  
28 Accountability Office study of COFA migrants in the United States in  
29 the fall of 2019;

30       NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully request that  
31 Congress take the appropriate steps to: Restore federal benefits for  
32 COFA migrants, the including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance  
33 Program and Medicaid; ensure that COFA citizens are appropriately  
34 counted as part of the 2020 census; consider the uniqueness of COFA  
35 status in all immigration policies, including exempting COFA citizens  
36 from changes to the public charge rules; and immediately begin work  
37 on COFA renewal negotiations.

38       BE IT RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately  
39 transmitted to the Honorable Donald J. Trump, President of the United

1 States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the  
2 House of Representatives, and each member of Congress from the State  
3 of Washington.

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