

BLUE PACIFIC ACT

SECTION-BY-SECTION SUMMARY

To establish a comprehensive, long-term United States strategy and policy for the Pacific Islands region, and for other purposes.

SEC. 1. SHORT TITLE AND TABLE OF CONTENTS.

- Establishes the short title of this bill as the “Boosting Long-term U.S. Engagement in the Pacific” or “BLUE Pacific” Act.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

- Defines “appropriate congressional committees” and “Pacific Islands” for the purposes of this Act.

TITLE I—POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND REGIONALISM

SEC. 101. FINDINGS.

SEC. 102. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

SEC. 103. STRATEGY FOR PACIFIC ISLANDS PARTNERSHIP.

- Codifies the Strategy for Pacific Islands Partnership and requires that it be updated every four years. Requires the strategy to include a description of overarching goals for the United States-Pacific Island Partnership, a description of measurable objectives for United States engagement in the Pacific Islands, an assessment of threats to the Pacific Islands region, a plan to address the security of the Pacific Islands region, a strategy to invest in and improve critical infrastructure and a regional Development Cooperation Strategy formulated by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

SEC. 104. STAFFING

- Recommends that the Administration increase the number of staff working on Pacific Islands issues and in the Pacific Islands to support this act.
- Requires a report on current staffing levels, any planned staffing level changes or a plan to carry out the act under current staffing levels and any funding necessary to support staff.
- Authorizes the Secretary of State and Secretary of Commerce to hire locally employed staff in the Pacific Islands.

SEC. 105. ASSISTANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

- Authorizes the Secretary of State, the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Chief Executive Officer of the United States International Development Finance Corporation, to provide support and technical assistance to Pacific Islands countries to help them navigate

existing development support from international organizations and multilateral financial institutions.

- Directs the Secretary of the Treasury to use the voice and vote of the United States at international financial institutions to support climate resilient infrastructure projects in the Pacific Islands.

SEC. 106. ALLIES AND PARTNERS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION.

- Requires the President to consult and coordinate with regional allies and partners for the purposes of deconflicting programming and ensuring complementarity of programs and shared efforts.
- Directs the President to establish a formal consultative process with regional allies and partners.

TITLE II—PEOPLE CENTERED DEVELOPMENT

SEC. 201. ASSISTANCE TO IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH OUTCOMES AND BUILD PUBLIC HEALTH CAPACITY.

- Authorizes the USAID Administrator to assist the Pacific Islands to improve health care outcomes and build public health capacity in the Pacific Islands through programming, technical assistance, and coordination with existing local and regional efforts.

SEC. 202. ASSISTANCE TO PROMOTE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

- Authorizes the President to provide assistance to promote the dissemination of free and accurate information including through media capacity building and education, strengthening and diversifying broadcast content, and investing in connectivity infrastructure.

SEC. 203. PROGRAM TO PROMOTE EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUNG ADULT LEADERS AND PROFESSIONALS.

- Expresses the sense of Congress that routinized people-to-people exchange programs strengthen existing relationships and advances United States interests and shared values in the region.
- Directs the Secretary of State to develop and implement a Pacific Islands Leadership Program to promote educational and professional development for young adult leaders and professionals from the Pacific Islands.
- Authorizes the program to be carried out via a competitive grant by the Department of State to qualified organizations with demonstrated expertise in the Pacific Islands, small grants to qualified young Pacific Islands leaders, regional workshops and professional fellowships, and in people-to-people exchanges.
- Requires the Secretary of State to provide a report on this program, including assessment of factors constraining the number and frequency of IVLP participants and a strategy for connecting alumni and participants to alumni of other exchange programs.

SEC. 204. EDUCATION ASSISTANCE.

- Expresses the sense of Congress on the importance of promoting basic education in the Pacific Islands and that the Pacific Islands meet the requirements outlined in subsection (c)(4) of section 105 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.
- Authorizes the President to provide assistance to promote sustainable, quality basic education in the Pacific Islands under section 105 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

SEC. 205. INVESTMENT AGREEMENTS.

- Requires the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) to seek to enter into investment incentive agreements with Pacific Islands nations. The DFC currently does not operate in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.

TITLE III—PEACE AND SECURITY

SEC. 301. BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL CIVILIAN AND NATIONAL SECURITY INSTITUTIONS.

- Directs the Secretary of State to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for security assistance to build the capacity of local civilian and national security institutions to address maritime security, transnational crime, emergency management and preparedness issues, including through cooperation with regional efforts and information sharing.
- Identifies the relevant authorities and programs to be included in this strategy.
- Recognizes Pacific Islands national police forces and coast guards as eligible entities to receive assistance under the relevant authorities and programs for this strategy.

SEC. 302. REPORTING ON TRANSNATIONAL CRIME.

- Directs the Secretary of State to prioritize efforts at assisting the Pacific Islands in ratifying and implementing international legal conventions related to transnational crime.
- Requires the Secretary of State to identify and update existing reports on transnational crime related to the Pacific Islands.
- Amends a reporting requirement from the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act related to Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing to include an assessment of gaps and limitations in the U.S. ability to assist priority regions and priority flag states due to resource constraints.

TITLE IV—RESOURCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SEC. 401. TRADE DEVELOPMENT WITH THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.

- Expresses the sense of Congress that the United States should expand bilateral and multilateral trade with the Pacific Islands to promote socio-economic development and mutual prosperity.
- Authorizes the United States Trade Representative to work to expand and diversify trade in the Pacific Islands and promote regional development.

SEC. 402. TRADE CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE FOR THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.

- Authorizes the USAID Administrator to support trade capacity building in the Pacific Islands. This support would focus on human and institutional capacity and infrastructure, implementation of international trade agreements, support gender equality and women-owned businesses, promote a favorable business environment and environmental protection, and more.

SEC. 403. UNITED STATES COMMERCIAL SERVICE.

- Directs the Secretary of Commerce to allocate additional Foreign Commercial Service Officers to the Pacific Islands.

TITLE V—CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTERS

SEC. 501. ASSISTANCE TO ENHANCE PREPAREDNESS FOR AND RESILIENCE TO NATURAL DISASTERS AND OTHER EMERGENCIES.

- Authorizes the USAID Administrator to assist the Pacific Islands in enhancing their disaster preparedness and resilience, including through education and training programs, technical assistance, and coordination of existing disaster mitigation and response plans.

SEC. 502. CLIMATE RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE.

- Authorizes the Secretary of State to invest in and improve critical infrastructure in the Pacific Islands, provide technical assistance to local government and civil society leaders, support investment and improvement in ecosystem conservation and protection and critical telecommunications infrastructure and cybersecurity.

TITLE VI—OCEAN AND ENVIRONMENT

SEC. 601. OCEANS MANAGEMENT.

- Authorizes the Secretary of State to support programming that promotes fisheries sustainability and marine biodiversity conservation in the Pacific Islands, including through assistance to promote the development, adoption, and implementation of regional sustainable fisheries policies, standards, and regulatory framework, partnerships with regional private sector interests in the adoption and implementation of seafood industry fair-labor standards and sustainable fishing practices; and technical assistance to local government and civil society leaders.

SEC. 602. SEA LEVEL RISE.

- Authorizes the Secretary of State, the Administrator of the USAID and the Secretary of Commerce to provide support and technical assistance to the Pacific Islands to address the impacts of sea level rise, including through programming aimed at protecting and mitigating the impacts of sea level rise on coastal communities and their economies,

protecting and increasing the resilience of critical coastal infrastructure; and preserving Pacific Islands Economic Exclusive Zones.

SEC. 603. ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, AND UNREGULATED FISHING.

- Updates reporting requirements in the National Defense Authorization Act to include an assessment of gaps or limitations in the ability of the United States to effectively assist priority regions and priority flag states relating to IUU fishing.

TITLE VII—TECHNOLOGY AND CONNECTIVITY

SEC. 701. DIGITAL ACCESS AND INCLUSION.

- Authorizes the Secretary of State to provide support to the Pacific Islands to expand access to high quality broadband and telecommunications infrastructure in the Pacific Islands and partner with regional private and public sector interests to promote and expand secure and accessible broadband connectivity as well as to strengthen the private sector and civil society’s digital capacity and digital skillset.

SEC. 702. CYBERSECURITY.

- Authorizes the Secretary of State to provide support and technical assistance to the Pacific Islands to increase adoption of policies and regulatory positions that encourage open, interoperable, reliable, and secure digital infrastructure and increase adoption of cybersecurity best practices in the Pacific Islands.

**TITLE VIII—REPORT ON THE STRATEGY FOR PACIFIC ISLANDS
PARTNERSHIP AND AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS**

SEC. 801. REPORT ON THE STRATEGY FOR PACIFIC ISLANDS PARTNERSHIP.

- Requires a report on the implementation of the Strategy for Pacific Islands partnership every two years. The report will contain an analysis of the security of the Pacific Islands, and an assessment of the U.S. diplomatic presence and supports for trade, development, press freedom, and resiliency. The report also requires a description of how U.S. government efforts align with regional development goals.

SEC. 802. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

- Authorizes the appropriations of \$250 million for each of fiscal years 2023 through 2033 for the implementation of this act.