

FLOOR REMARKS ON CASE AMENDMENT #9 TO H.R. 4836
Congressman Ed Case (Hawai‘i – First District)
November 14, 2019

Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I rise today in support of my amendment to confirm that Native Hawaiians and Alaska Natives are included for the purposes and considerations of the U.S. Export Finance Agency’s new Office of Minority and Women Inclusion.

I am proud to be joined in offering this amendment by my friend and colleague, the Dean of this House, the gentleman from Alaska, Mr. Young.

In reauthorizing the Export-Import Bank of the United States, H.R. 4863 would create an Office of Minority and Women Inclusion for the new U.S. Export Finance Agency. This office would be responsible for engaging with minority-owned and women-owned businesses in the programs, contracts and activities of the agency. This includes outreach to those businesses to ensure their awareness of the export assistance provided by the agency. The laudable policy goal of this office is to increase access to export assistance and foster overall business for underrepresented communities.

However, H.R. 4863 currently uses, references section 1204(c) of the Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery, and Enforcement Act of 1989 which defines “minority” as “any Black American, Native American, Hispanic American, or Asian American.”

Because of the unique statuses that Native Hawaiians and Alaska Natives have and the complexities of federal law, the term “Native American” is not always understood to include Native Hawaiians and Alaska Natives. My amendment is a simple clarification that, for the purposes of the agency and its Office of Minority and Women Inclusion, those groups are included, as they are for many other comparable federal programs.

Adopting this amendment ensures that Native Hawaiian-owned and Alaska Native-owned businesses will be part of the agency’s outreach efforts and have greater opportunity to benefit from the agency’s export assistance.

In my home state of Hawai‘i, Native Hawaiian-owned businesses are an essential part of our economy, but this is also true in countless other communities throughout our country. According to the 2012 Survey of Business Owners, there are almost 26,000 Native Hawaiian-owned businesses in the United States, employing over 20,000 people. Improving outreach to Native Hawaiian-owned businesses by the agency provides those businesses the chance to grow and expand opportunities for the families and communities they support not just in Hawai‘i but across the country. Native Hawaiian-owned businesses contribute to the economies of every single state and the District of Columbia. Nearly half of those businesses operate outside of Hawai‘i.

These statistics demonstrate the significant economic impact that Native Hawaiians have, but numbers alone cannot capture the extent to which their businesses contribute to the overall empowerment of Native Hawaiian communities. Nor do

such numbers tell the stories of the countless lives that have been improved and the communities strengthened as a result of their innovation and entrepreneurship.

Everything that I have said here today applies equally to Alaska Natives, as I'm sure Mr. Young would be quick to point out.

This amendment will ensure that the reauthorized agency will help Native Hawaiian-owned and Alaska Native-owned businesses pursue new business opportunities, support American jobs across the country and sustain and enrich the communities they support as will be the case for other minority- and women-owned businesses.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I reserve the balance of my time.