

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. FINDINGS.

SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.

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

SEC. 5. AUTHORITY TO CONSOLIDATE REPORTS; FORM OF REPORTS.

- Permits reports required under this Act to be consolidated.
- Establishes that each report required by this Act shall be submitted in unclassified form but may contain a classified annex.

TITLE I – UNITED STATES ENGAGEMENT AND COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

SEC. 101. UNITED STATES DIPLOMATIC PRESENCE IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.

- Directs the Secretary of State to assess U.S. diplomatic and development presence in the Pacific Islands, including gaps in such presence, limitations and challenges posed by such gaps, and a strategy to expand and elevate U.S. presence.
- Authorizes the Secretary of State and Secretary of Commerce to hire locally employed staff in the Pacific Islands.
- Requires the USAID Administrator to provide a regional development cooperation strategy for the Pacific Islands and update it every five years thereafter.

SEC. 102. INTERNATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACADEMY FOR THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.

- Directs the Secretary of State to create and implement a strategy to expand coverage of the International Law Enforcement Academies program to the Pacific Islands, including by expanding coverage of ILEA Bangkok to the Pacific Islands or by establishing a new program in the Pacific Islands region. Such strategy shall take into consideration costs of implementation, effectiveness, and capacity of the Pacific Islands to receive sustained law enforcement training programs.

SEC. 103. SECURITY ASSISTANCE FOR THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.

- 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.
- Requires a report on this strategy to include security challenges to the Pacific Islands, demonstrated security assistance needs, existing security assistance programs, including those of partner countries, programs for training and sustainment, and more.

SEC. 104. COUNTERING 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 support a biennial report on the status of ratification and implementation of 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.
- Directs the Secretary of State to provide a report on illegal logging and associated trade in the Pacific Islands, their impacts, efforts taken by countries to take corrective action to mitigate illegal logging, and steps taken by U.S. agencies to assist the Pacific Islands to address these issues.
- 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.

SEC. 105. COORDINATION WITH REGIONAL ALLIES.

- Requires the Secretary of State 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 Secretary of State to establish a formal consultative process with regional allies and partners.
- Requires the Secretary of State to provide an annual report to review ongoing efforts and initiatives undertaken by regional allies and partners, efforts undertaken by non-allied foreign actors that are viewed as potentially harmful, an assessment of U.S. programs and their complementarity with the efforts of regional allies, and a review of the formal consultative process required in this section.

TITLE II – DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

SEC. 201. 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.
- Directs the United States Trade Representative to develop and implement a strategy to expand and diversify trade and promote regional development.
- Requires the Trade Representative to provide an annual report assessing the readiness of the Pacific Islands to enter into enhanced trade relationships, reviewing existing regional multilateral and bilateral trade agreements, and identifying opportunities to increase trade and economic integration.
- Requires the Trade Representative to provide a briefing on usage of the Generalized System of Preferences by the Pacific Islands.

SEC. 202. TRADE CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE FOR THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.

- Directs the USAID Administrator to develop and implement a trade capacity building initiative, with recognition to and in coordination with existing regional efforts and frameworks, for the Pacific Islands. The initiative 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.
- Directs the Secretary of Commerce to allocate additional Foreign Commercial Service Officers to the Pacific Islands.
- Authorizes \$15,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2026 for this section.

SEC. 203. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS INITIATIVE IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.

- Directs the USAID Administrator to develop and implement an initiative 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.
- Requires the USAID Administrator to provide a report assessing disaster risks to the region, reviewing existing efforts to provide assistance and training for natural disasters preparedness and emergency management, and implementation of the initiative.
- Authorizes \$40,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2026 for this section.

SEC. 204. PEACE CORPS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.

- Expresses the sense of Congress that the Peace Corps should reopen its programs in as many of the Pacific Islands as possible, including where it has previously operated but has suspended operations.
- Direct Peace Corps to report on demand for Peace Corps presence in the Pacific Islands, limitations to expanding its current presence in the region, and a plan for returning to the Pacific Islands.

SEC. 205. PUBLIC HEALTH IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.

- Directs the USAID Administrator to devise and implement a strategy for improving health care outcomes and building public health capacity in the Pacific Islands through programming, technical assistance, and coordination with existing local and regional efforts.
- Requires the USAID Administrator to provide a report on this strategy, including health care challenges, issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and implementation of the strategy required.
- Authorizes \$20,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2026 for this section.

SEC. 206. 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.
- Authorizes \$5,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2022 through 2026 to carry out this section.

SEC. 207. CLIMATE RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.

- Expresses the sense of Congress that the U.S. should assist the Pacific Islands in achieving their development goals by leveraging public and private sector investments and coordinating with like-minded partners and allies.
- Directs the Secretary of State to develop and implement a strategy to invest in and improve critical infrastructure in the Pacific Islands, provide technical assistance to local government and civil society leaders, and support investment and improvement in ecosystem conservation and protection.
- Directs the Secretary of the Treasury to instruct representatives of the United States at international financial institutions to use the voice and vote of the United States to support climate resilient infrastructure projects in the Pacific Islands.
- Requires the Secretary of State to provide an annual report reviewing foreign infrastructure developments in the Pacific Islands by non-U.S. allied countries and partners and assessments of their environmental impacts and financial sustainability.
- Authorizes \$50,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2022 through 2026 for this section.

SEC. 210. COORDINATION WITH OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES AND COOPERATION AND PARTICIPATION OF NONGOVERNMENTAL UNITED STATES ENTITIES.

- Directs the designated federal agencies, in carrying out sections 202, 203, 205, 206, and 207, to coordinate with relevant U.S. agencies especially with regards to the Freely Associated States and seek the cooperation and participation of U.S. businesses, NGOs, and institutions of higher education.

TITLE III – PROMOTION OF UNITED STATES VALUES

SEC. 301. PRESS FREEDOM IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.

- Expresses the sense of Congress that the U.S. should work with allies and partners to provide free or low-cost access to national news wires so the Pacific Islands and to assist the Pacific Islands to develop regulations for the licensing and operations of foreign media.
- 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.
- Directs the Secretary of State to provide a report assessing the national laws of the Pacific Islands with regards to foreign investment, relevant licensing regulations, and government restrictions on free expression, as well as analyses of covert efforts by foreign media actors in the Pacific Islands to influence, shape, or circumvent regulations and co-opt local media and narratives.
- Authorizes \$2,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2022 through 2026 for this section.

SEC. 302. U.S. AGENCY FOR GLOBAL MEDIA.

- Directs the CEO of the U.S. Agency for Global Media to devise and implement a plan to provide expanded media content to the Pacific Islands and partner with journalists in the Pacific Islands.
- Requires a report that includes an assessment of facilities and costs expected for expanding coverage to the Pacific Islands, options for Voice of America affiliates, and means of evaluating success.
- Authorizes \$2,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2022 through 2026 for this section.

SEC. 303. GENDER EQUALITY.

- Affirms the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment to our policy in the Pacific Islands and recognizes existing regional frameworks and platforms on gender equality.
- Directs the Secretary of State and the USAID Administrator to promote gender equality in our political, economic, social, and cultural development programs in the Pacific Islands.

SEC. 304. PACIFIC ISLANDS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

- 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.
- Authorizes \$10,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2022 through 2026 for this section.

SEC. 305. CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT.

- Directs the USAID Administrator to develop and implement a program to promote civil society development in the Pacific Islands for the purposes of strengthening independent media and press freedom, empowering citizens, strengthening rule of law and government accountability, and promoting democratic political culture.
- Authorizes this program to include technical assistance and support, small grants to qualified civil society organizations, and competitive grants to U.S. organizations with demonstrated expertise in civil society development and the Pacific Islands.
- Requires the USAID Administrator to report on this program, including an assessment of civil society sectors in the Pacific Islands and an identification of objectives and measures of success.
- Authorizes \$5,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2022 through 2026 for this section.