

PRESENTATION BY CONGRESSMAN JAMES C. MOYLAN
INTERAGENCY GROUP ON INSULAR AREAS 2025 SENIOR PLENARY SESSION
February 19, 2025

Håfa Adai, Tirow, Talofa, and Good Morning to everyone! I would like to thank Secretary Burgum, Director Meyer, our Governors, Congressional Representatives, special guests, and the hard-working team from OIA for being here today on this cold morning. With weather like this, maybe we can host the next meeting in Guam?

I'd like to start by congratulating Secretary Burgum and Director Meyer. As I continue to represent our beautiful island of Guam, I look forward to working with you both to deliver for Americans in the territories. I would also like to thank President Trump for continuing these annual dialogues and for bringing us all together to discuss what matters most to our islands.

Guam faces many challenges. Aging infrastructure, threats to our ecosystems, and challenging economic policies have hurt the Territories. During this year's session, we have a unique opportunity to address these critical issues and build a bridge to a brighter future.

We are an island of patriots, answering the call whenever asked. Despite our limited resources, Guam has always opened our arms to those in need. Our sons and daughters, the most valuable resource we have, serve our nation at a higher rate than anywhere else in the nation. War refugees and our brothers and sisters across Micronesia know Guam as an island of opportunity.

But for too long, Guam's most vulnerable have been left behind. Disabled and elderly residents have been excluded from access to Supplemental Security Income. It is a tragedy that in 2025 any of our constituents should be denied such an important program.

We must fix this gap in coverage and restore the ideal that all Americans, regardless of where they live, deserve the same access to care.

No other place in the U.S. has the relationship we have with the Department of Defense. Through this collaboration, we've kept Guam safe and shielded our nation from bad actors in the Pacific. But the cornerstone to this partnership is that it's done right. The One Guam approach must continue to be the focal point of this relationship.

Likewise, we need to care for our veterans. VA services for Guam *must* mirror mainland-quality. We have a long way to go. Serious misconduct at the Vet Center and nonpayment to medical

providers emphasizes the need for change. These problems are a sad reflection of how veterans in the islands have been treated.

I urge the Administration to join me in efforts to improve veterans' services and restructure regional care to deliver for veterans in the Marianas and Freely Associated States.

We must also confront the rising costs of airfare that both our island residents and service members face. Absurd airfares, monopolistic practices, and outdated rules plague our community. No one should choose between loved ones and finances. As we coordinate with the Administration, I ask that they support cabotage exemptions with our Pacific Partners.

We also have the opportunity this Congress to improve quality of life for the People of Guam. For nearly 20 years, funding for public and ecological safety has remained stagnant. Without increases, resources are being stretched thin. We are being asked to do more with less.

Almost 80 years ago, the Brown Tree Snake was introduced to our island by military cargo. Killing 10 of our 13 native bird populations, they've destroyed our ecosystem. Today, we are no closer to eradicating Brown Tree Snakes than we were decades ago.

I thank the Interior and the OIA for its continued work to rehabilitate our precious native species and its commitment to fighting invasive species. If we hope to reintroduce our native birds to Guam, additional funding is required to eradicate these invasive species. By working together, we will be able to hear the songs of our native birds once again.

The growing stray animal population puts our people in harm's way. They stress our fragile ecosystems and deter tourists, a vital part of our economy. Supporting local efforts will reduce the stray population and improve our ecosystem and economy. It is unsustainable to continue as we are, and we need assistance now.

I also ask for your support to eradicate feral pigs, which negatively impact local farmers. These pigs directly threaten sustainability efforts by farmers and residents who want to grow food in their own backyards. As I begin conversations with the OIA, I hope to see the fruits of our labor soon.

We must work to achieve parity between Territory and State healthcare systems. Despite performing the same roles, normal State Medicaid funding and hospital designations are

restricted from our islands. My ask is simple: Americans should receive the same quality of healthcare regardless of where they live.

While we address these longstanding issues, we must also prepare for the future. Located in the middle of ‘Typhoon Alley’, our residents are at risk. The path to preventing this is clear: funding resilient infrastructure. Investing in our schools, roads, and energy grid, will save us money in the future by lowering recovery costs.

While constituents depend on this infrastructure, it is also vital for U.S. Indo-Pacific security strategy. Because Guam and the DOD have to share critical infrastructure, local and national security are undeniably linked. Investing in underground powerlines, hardened roads and bridges, and higher-capacity water treatment facilities will ensure Guam and our Armed Services are ready for whatever may come.

While I agree that we must eliminate fraud, waste, and abuse, it is important to remember that many on our island rely on Federal assistance programs. These discussions should not be a one-size-fits-all solution. Programs like WIC, SNAP, Medicare, Medicaid, and public housing support our underserved communities.

I would like to thank you all once again for the opportunity to voice some of the most pressing issues facing our island and looking for ways to collaborate to address them. Our people have answered the call to support our nation when they needed our land, hands, and hearts, and now we ask the federal government to reciprocate

I look forward to working with the Administration to improve the quality of life for all Americans, regardless of where they live. Thank you.