



NOHNO NEWS

Phone Meeting with US Senator Mazie Hirono's Office

On April 30, 2021 at 10:30 AM, NOHNO had a teleconference meeting with Senator Mazie Hirono's office. At the scheduled phone meeting, the attendees were Universe Yamase Lawrence (NOHNO representative), Ms. Wendy Clerinx (Senator Hirono's staff) and Mr. Chris Cryan (Senator Hirono's staff).

During the meeting, NOHNO shared the challenges that the Compact of Free Association (COFA) citizens, (citizens from the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau), have and continue to encounter while living in the United States. In addition to bringing awareness of these challenges, NOHNO asked for Senator Hirono's Office for immediate assistance. There were couple major issues shared and they were:

1. When your I94 is damaged or lost, it is a difficult process to attain another one. Majority of NOHNO's clients are COFA citizens who arrived in the United States prior to May 2013, when Custom and Border Protection established an automated system that eliminated paper form I94. Your information is no longer available on the Custom and Border Protection website found here at i94.cbp.dhs.gov.
2. When applying for a US Social Security number, COFA citizens' applications take up to 5 months and more for U.S. Immigration to verify a COFA citizen's legal status. A social security officer in Missouri mentioned to NOHNO that the only group of people that experience this long hold is only COFA citizens. The reason is because their legal status needs to be verified. Every other ethnic group that applies through the Missouri SS Office would get their social security number within 2 weeks.

All of NOHNO's clients mentioned they have reached out to the FSM Embassy in D.C. and were told couple ways to get their I94. You could either travel again or apply using USCIS form I-102, Replacement for I94 which costs \$445. All of NOHNO's clients have been without their I94 for almost 10 years. The reason being is that these options shared to them by the FSM Embassy are not doable as these options are too costly. They cannot afford to travel nor pay for the expensive form fee. Some of NOHNO's clients shared that they have filled out the I-102 form, submitted the \$445 fee, and nothing was sent to them. Currently, there are no other new alternatives provided by the FSM Embassy DC.

Senator Mazie Hirono's staff told NOHNO that these issues would be shared at their internal office meeting and they will do their own research on these issues. The Hirono staff shared they would work with the responsible agencies as well. They provided recommendations to NOHNO on how NOHNO can tackle these issues.

NOHNO is working hard to help clear these livelihood obstacles COFA citizens are dealing with in the United States. By doing that, reaching out to Senator Mazie Hirono's Office is one of the paths.

Note: Images below is what every NOHNO client receives after submitting his/her SS application. It says 4 weeks but it takes more than 5 months for some COFA clients depending on where they live in the United States.

Before we can issue you a Social Security number card, we must verify the document(s) you gave us to show your Alien status with the Federal, State, or local office in the United States that issued the document(s). This may take up to 4 weeks.

If that office verifies the authenticity of your document(s) we will mail you a Social Security number card. If that office does not verify your document(s), you are not eligible for a Social Security number card and we will inform you of this in writing.