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East-West Center Launches *Pacific Islands Matter for America / America Matters for the Pacific Islands* Publication and Website

WASHINGTON, DC (March 8, 2022) – The East-West Center (EWC) has officially launched a premier publication and website on US-Pacific Islands relations, [*The Pacific Islands Matter for America / America Matters for the Pacific Islands*](#).

The publication and accompanying data visualizations highlight the deep historical and contemporary significance of the relationship between the United States, the State of Hawai'i and Pacific Islands countries and territories including the US territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, as well as the freely associated states of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. The publication also covers Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa,



the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

The publication and [website](#) feature infographics, data, and analysis of economic, diplomatic, and cultural ties at the national, state, and local levels.

“The Pacific Islands Matter for America initiative creates space for the diverse voices of the Pacific by opening dialogue about how and why the people of the Pacific Islands and America matter to each other, advancing collective efforts to address climate, governance, education, economies, health, and sustainable development,” said **Suzanne Puanani Vares-Lum, President of the East-West Center**. “The East-West Center Pacific Islands Development Program, which is Secretariat of the Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders (PICL), remains enthusiastic about new and exciting partnerships and initiatives, looking forward to serving as a bridge between the United States and Pacific Islands governments and peoples across the region. Our efforts propel us on a new journey toward exploring and discovering uncharted ideas, solutions, and possibilities.”

A hybrid event to launch the new publication, jointly hosted by the House Pacific Islands Caucus and the EWC, was led by Dr. Satu Limaye, Vice President of the East-West Center and Director of the Center's Washington office, and concluded with an in-person reception on Capitol Hill.

Key remarks were offered by **East-West Center President Suzanne Puanani Vares-Lum** and **Interior Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Keone Nakoa**. The launch included remarks from prominent US and Pacific Islands leaders and government officials, including co-chairs of the Congressional Pacific Islands Caucus:

- **Rep. Ami Bera** (CA-7),
- **Rep. Don Young** (AK-At Large)
- **Rep. Steve Chabot** (OH-1),
- **Rep. Ed Case** (HI-1), and
- **Rep. Brad Sherman** (CA-30).

Additional speakers included:

- **Erika L. Moritsugu**, Deputy Assistant to the President and Asian American and Pacific Islander Senior Liaison for the White House Office

of the Chief of Staff

- **Mark Lambert**, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, United States Department of State
- **Rep. Aumua Amata Radewagen**, Delegate, (American Samoa – At Large), US House of Representatives
- **Cara Allison Marshall, Principal Director**, East Asia, OSD-Policy/Indo-Pacific Security Affairs, Department of Defense
- **H.E. Arthur Sinodinos**, Ambassador of Australia to the United States, Embassy of Australia in Washington, DC
- **H.E. Rosemary Banks**, Ambassador of New Zealand to the United States, New Zealand Embassy to the United States of America
- **H.E. Hersey Kyota**, Ambassador of Palau to the United States, Embassy of Palau in Washington, DC
- **H.E. Dr. Satyendra Prasad**, Ambassador of Fiji to the UN, Permanent Mission of Fiji to the United Nations

The event brought together members of Congress and their staff, US and Pacific Islands government officials, the private sector, and regional experts to celebrate the partnerships between the United States and the Pacific Islands region.

“This product of one of our country’s and world’s premier Indo-Pacific institutions captures the critical importance of the Pacific Islands in this Pacific Century,” said **Congressman Ed Case (HI-1), co-chair of the bipartisan US House Pacific Islands Caucus**. “It will prove the go-to resource for stakeholders to focus on and appreciate the shared histories, cultures, values and interests with which we can and must forge a common path in the Indo-Pacific on regional security and stability, development, trade, climate change and other challenges of our times.”

“The *Pacific Islands Matter for America* publication and website highlight the important connections and relationships that Hawai‘i and the rest of the United States have not only with the Insular Areas, but with all Pacific Islands,” said **Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Keone Nakoa**. “The deep, historic, and mutually-beneficial relationships that the United States have in the Pacific remain strong and the US territories and the freely associated states harbor important strategic locations with significant ocean resources. Moreover, the Pacific Island peoples have and continue to

contribute greatly to the fabric of this country. This publication aims to highlight some of the key aspects of the unique relationships the Pacific Islands and the United States have with one another.”

Produced by the East-West Center with funding support from the US Department of the Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs, the inaugural edition of *The Pacific Islands Matter for America / America Matters for The Pacific Islands* brings to light important facts and figures, including:

- The Pacific Islands region spans 15% of the world's surface area;
- Pacific Island economies have a combined GDP of \$139 billion;
- US relations with the Pacific span over 150 years;
- The United States partners with Pacific militaries and law enforcement;
- Under the Pacific Pledge, the US government has committed about \$350 million in assistance to Pacific Islands countries;
- The United States exports over \$400 million in goods to Pacific Islands countries;
- Over 250,000 US tourists visit Pacific Islands countries annually;
- 57% of US students who studied in the Pacific Islands studied in Fiji;
- California and Hawai’i host nearly 50% of the Pacific Islander population in the United States; and
- The United States shares eight sister city partnerships with five Pacific Islands countries.

“I am pleased that the *Asia Matters for America* initiative can add the focus on the Pacific Islands region, countries, and territories to increase mutual understanding of this increasingly vital region of interest to the United States, allies, and partners. And I thank the Office of Insular Affairs and the Pacific Islands Caucus and its co-chairs for their support,” said **Satu Limaye, East-West Center Vice President and Director, *Asia Matters for America* initiative.**

The Pacific Islands Matter for America / America Matters for Pacific Islands publication is funded in part through the US Department of the Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs Technical Assistance Program. The publication can also be found on the [Asia Matters for America](#) website.

About the *Asia Matters for America* Initiative

The East-West Center's *Asia Matters for America* initiative maps the trade, investment, employment, business, diplomacy, security, education, tourism, and people-to-people connections between the United States and the Indo-Pacific at the national, state, and local levels. The website, publications, and one-page summaries for states and congressional districts are resources for understanding the robust and dynamic US-Indo-Pacific relationship. The initiative was created in 2008 and has produced 19 publications, thousands of one-page connections summaries for US states and congressional districts, hundreds of articles on US-Asia relations at the national, state, and local levels, dozens of public programs involving a range of government and private stakeholders and partners, and over 150 data visualizations on the initiative's website: AsiaMattersforAmerica.org.

About the East-West Center

The East-West Center promotes better relations and understanding among the people and nations of the United States, Asia, and the Pacific through cooperative study, research, and dialogue. Established by the US Congress in 1960, the Center serves as a resource for information and analysis on critical issues of common concern, bringing people together to exchange views, build expertise, and develop policy options. The Center is an independent, public, nonprofit organization with funding from the US government, and additional support provided by private agencies, individuals, foundations, corporations, and governments in the region. The Center's Washington, DC office focuses on preparing the United States for an era of growing Indo-Pacific prominence, and manages the *Asia Matters for America* initiative.



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