

**OPENING STATEMENT**  
**HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO**  
**CHAIRWOMAN**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON INSULAR AFFAIRS, OCEANS AND WILDLIFE**  
**LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON H.R. 4339 AND H.R. 6015**  
**SEPTEMBER 16, 2010**

Our hearing today affords the Subcommittee an opportunity to examine closely two bills that share, in part, an underlying objective of engendering a more responsive and assistive Federal Government for fulfilling important needs in the territories.

The first bill on our agenda is H.R. 4339. Introduced by Congressman Sablan, H.R. 4339 is aimed at expanding opportunities for students in the Northern Mariana Islands to become civically engaged and to gain meaningful, practical experience in government service. In proposing the establishment of a federally-administered fellowship program for this purpose, Congressman Sablan honors most fittingly a longtime educator who made an indelible mark in the CNMI. The late Dr. Rita Hocog Inos, who battled cancer and passed away a year ago, last month, is a shining example of what it means to give back to community and to pursue a career in government service.

Acquiring direct insight into the functioning of government, whether at the local or federal level, not only positions one well for a career in government but also equips one with knowledge for success in the private sector. Most notably, many young adults fortunate enough to secure a government-sponsored fellowship, are spurred to a lifetime commitment of active, engaged citizenship in their community. This bill is timely as the relatively small but growing federal presence in the Northern Mariana Islands presents another opportunity for partnership between the Federal Government with the community. Additionally, a fellowship program for CNMI students would help bridge the distance and financial challenges they inevitably and unavoidably face through no choosing of their own in exploring careers of interest to them and in augmenting their classroom learning.

While technology has helped connect classrooms – and in our case today, a witness to this hearing room – there simply is no substitute for direct, on-the-job learning and personal mentorship that a fellowship entails. Therefore, we welcome perspectives today on this most meritorious proposal and also ideas about how best to broaden the availability of such opportunities to students not only residing in the CNMI but in each of the territories and in the Freely Associated States as well. In doing so, we join Congressman Sablan in honoring the legacy of Dr. Inos, and embrace the commitment of all educators who, like Dr. Inos, commit themselves to inspiring young people to pursue government service and become engaged citizens in their communities.

The second bill of focus today is H.R. 6015, a bill I introduced for a two-fold purpose. First, H.R. 6015 would formalize and make permanent the work of the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the Department of Commerce in publishing gross domestic product statistics for the territories. Second, H.R. 6015 would make technical corrections to the immigration provisions of Public Law 110-229 affecting my district, the territory of Guam, that would conform the law

to Congressional intent. The first set of GDP estimates released earlier this year by the B-E-A for American Samoa, the CNMI, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands is the result of an initiative of the Office of Insular Affairs at the Department of the Interior. As a result, the four territorial governments were afforded access to expertise and federal support to help capture and determine GDP data. Such statistics improve economic planning, forecasting and decision-making on the part of both the public and private sectors.

The BEA presently computes GDP data for each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia as part of its permanent program. While OIA and the BEA have extended their interagency agreement for a second round of GDP estimates for the territories, it is important that this work be institutionalized and that it continue for the foreseeable future. Enactment of H.R. 60-15 would accomplish this objective as well as extend the GDP work to encompass Puerto Rico and the Freely Associated States.

Last, before the Subcommittee today is the matter of country participation in the Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program and federal policy affecting that program that is inconsistent with Congressional intent and program authorization. In devising the initial list of eligible countries for the program the Department of Homeland Security determined two countries to have had “significant economic benefit.” Congress intended for such countries to be made eligible for the program. Yet the Department published a regulation which precludes any such possibility, and in that same regulation committed to reevaluate such country participation after implementation of additional layered security measures. In the interim, the Department is paroling into the CNMI, and only the CNMI, nationals of the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation, both countries of “significant economic benefit.”

H.R. 6015 would require the Department to provide for an “alternative procedure” for such benefit to be realized in the entire Visa Waiver Program area should the Department maintain these countries as ineligible for participation in the program. Tourism continues to be a large driver of the economy of both Guam and the CNMI, and these new markets must be included to ensure the viability of the visitor industry in our region. As this matter remains before the President’s Interagency Group on Insular Areas, and inevitably involves input of the Department of the Interior, we welcome today an update on the overall federal effort to strengthen both security and country participation under the Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program.

In closing, I appreciate the support we have received from my friend, and our Ranking Republican Member, Congressman Brown in addressing insular issues, and most especially his support with regard to the Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on this Subcommittee on both sides of the aisle to improve federal policy affecting the insular areas, and in the case of the two bills before us today – to engender a more responsive and assistive Federal Government for fulfilling these important needs.