

**Statement for the Record
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water and Power**

H.R. 6062, Amendments to the Constitution of American Samoa

September 11, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Department of the Interior (Interior) on H.R. 6062, a bill relating to Congressional approval of amendments to the American Samoa Constitution, introduced by Representative Radewagen.

The Department supports H.R. 6062, which would repeal a statutory requirement that amendments or modifications to the Constitution of American Samoa may be made only by Act of Congress. Enactment of H.R. 6062 would restore the ability of the people of American Samoa to approve amendments to the territorial constitution without further Congressional action.

In 2022, American Samoa held a Constitutional Convention that consisted of members selected from each county in the Territory and Swains Island. The Convention recommended eleven amendments to the Revised Constitution of 1967, and on November 8, 2022, a majority of voters approved five of the eleven proposed constitutional amendments. It was the first time since enactment of 48 U.S.C. 1662a that a majority of voters in American Samoa approved proposed amendments to the Revised Constitution of 1967.

In his December 14, 2022, letter transmitting the five approved amendments to Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, Governor of American Samoa Lemanu P.S. Mauga's first sentence was simply, "The people of American Samoa have spoken." Since receiving the letter, we at the Department have had several discussions with Governor Lemanu, Representative Radewagen, and members of their respective staffs about the process and the next steps for adoption of the amendments to the revised constitution of 1967. It has been their determination and our consensus decision that passage of H.R. 6062 is the best next step in the process to formally adopt the constitutional amendments and to honor the people's vote on November 8, 2022.

The people of American Samoa have spoken, and we encourage this Committee to take swift action to approve H.R. 6062 and Congress to pass the legislation. We also acknowledge the honorable representative from American Samoa in her consistent efforts to protect, enhance, and advance American Samoa's political development.