



Common Cause (American Samoa) Inc
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April 1, 2009

TO: Hon. Gaoteote Palaie, President of the Senate
Hon. Savali Ale, Speaker of the House
Fono, American Samoa Government

Honorable Gentlemen;

Common Cause commends Fono leadership in both chambers and the work of your initial session 2009. We applaud the diligence and concerns brought out in chambers throughout your hearings and look forward, as in years past, to work closely with Fono leadership.

Primarily, Common Cause takes the position that we must become vigilant with every decision made in the Fono so as to avoid another fiasco as in giving Governor Togiola a \$20M loan, without strictures on how to expend ASG Retirement Fund monies. We are in a situation of a "lame duck" administration, and nothing is to stop ill-made executive decisions that will be inherited by the taxpayers and the next administration. Having off-shore ASG accounts should be illegal when the Fono is unable to ascertain the amount of interest earned, particularly when it is your fiduciary responsibility to appropriate ASG monies. Too many people have gone to jail in this century under the Togiola administration and, that, along with our high risk status, should not be a way of life for the good people of our Territory.

Common Cause calls on the Fono to uphold credibility in confirmation of directors. Resubmission of director candidates to the Fono should include new information to assist in revising one's vote, otherwise, reconsideration is moot. Your initial vote was cast upon your own belief in the presentation of each candidate, and unless there is new information to reconsider changing your vote, confirmation or lack of should stand. The Fono establishes the Chamber rules and its high time you remove the stigma of political tactics from decisions that would wrongly place someone in the highest seat of an ASG department.

Common Cause also calls on the Fono to televise its proceedings as well as create a website for each chamber. We live in a high tech century and unavailability of the Fono in action is being questioned by members of the public, especially young people who believe regression exists in the Fono when compared to the 1990's. Watching you in session is an education of its own and there is a wealth of knowledge to be gained from having access to televised proceedings as well as on the internet.

With the initial Stimulus Package earmarked at \$33.3M, we believe that a Comptroller for ASG is vital. Governor Togiola has selected his Accountability Team, designated to carry out the responsibility of a fulltime comptroller. We are well aware that monies specifically are designated to ASG agencies and a website is to provide the public with information on all programs.

The public has called on Common Cause to bring to your attention the need for a fulltime independent auditor or comptroller for ASG. We believe the Fono should call on the HR Director to fill this position immediately. It is inexcusable to rely on political appointees to ascertain the financial health of ASG.

We, also, believe subcommittee chairs play a vital role in the Stimulus Package strictures and we would like to be able to have Fono members apprise us of how monies going into each agency is being appropriated from the Stimulus Package. Hearings can be held after working hours to allow people to attend.

If you look at the Pennsylvania Senate Bill #6 2009, establishing a Commission on Stimulus Accountability, there is a member of both chambers serving on the Oversight Team (equivalence of our Accountability Team). You will also discover that no new people were hired; that staff from the various offices were assigned to assist, and that no one is paid to work on the Accountability Team.

The Stimulus Package requires that ASG adopt the Tax Table of 2002. What it does not require is for us to permanently adopt this Tax Table once the Stimulus Act activities are completed. Common Cause urges the Fono to please look into making this permanent, as well as amend our laws to create income bracket levels so those making greater salaries pay more taxes in spite of their itemized deductions. ASG needs revenue sources and this is one area that would generate more revenue with the Fono taking the lead.

Would the Fono please find out the Unemployment Rate for American Samoa? These statistics are essential to any programs and services of ASG and people would then be able to become more creative on how to address the problem of joblessness.

Questions keep coming to us on whether the Fono can be aware of cases to be prosecuted by the AG on government fraud in order to avoid cases reaching Statute of Limitation. As long as the Office of the Attorney General is not independent of politics, some cases will fall into oblivion. You may wish to look into electing the position of AG or create procedures to follow up on all cases.

Lastly, Common Cause brings to your attention the concern of retirees and ASG employees who would like to have the ASGRF law amended so that they can elect members to serve as their representative on the Board. Their concern focuses on how much is collected and expended monthly, that public hearings are not held annually, and that a quarterly newsletter or website should pose information for them to review.

On behalf of Common Cause members and supporters, I wish to thank you as well as the Senators and Representatives, for your attention on these matters. We have an astute public, who want the

American Samoa Government to be worthy of us as honest Christians, people who take our responsibility very seriously. Gone are the days of non-Samoans to come and show us how to run our government. Our challenge is to make sure that we all do what's right for our people and our generations of children. Take the politics out of your decisions and think of us, the general public.

Respectfully;

Trudie Sala, Ed.D.
President
Common Cause American Samoa

cc: Hon. Togiola T. Tulafono, Governor of American Samoa
Hon. Eni Faleomavaega, Congressman of American Samoa