

Testimony of Robert Riley
Ambassadorial Nominee to the Federated States of Micronesia
Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today and am grateful to President Obama and Secretary Kerry for their confidence in nominating me to be United States Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). If confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to work with you, this Committee, and other Members of Congress to advance American interests in the Pacific. I am thrilled to be associated again with our Embassy in the FSM, as I supported the operations of Embassy Kolonia while assigned to our Embassy in Manila from 2009 to 2013, and I count myself fortunate to be a member of a select group to have worked with our Mission in this beautiful but faraway country.

My sense of service was inculcated in me by my late father and namesake, a highly dedicated doctor who devoted himself to his patients and waived his fees for the poor, and by my 90-year-old mother, Fritzi, here today, who raised her four children selflessly while my father worked, started work on her Bachelor's degree at age 40, finished her Master's degree at 55, and then worked as a college professor until she was 70.

Also present is my step-father, John Kenny, an active and wonderful man, who married my mother when he was 88, and she was 85. My dear wife Timmy was unable to make it today; she is keeping the home fires burning at my current post in Indonesia. My two beautiful daughters were also unable to be here – Susan is a Peace Corps Volunteer in China, and Carol is attending college in California.

The FSM consists of over 600 mountainous islands and low-lying coral atolls spread over one million square miles of the Pacific Ocean. It faces inherent challenges to economic development, including susceptibility to natural disasters, remoteness from major markets, and limited land resources. The United States and the FSM have enjoyed a close and special relationship for over 65 years. In 1947, the United Nations designated the United States as the Administering Authority of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, which included the FSM, and, in 1986, the Compact of Free Association between the FSM and the United States entered into force, ushering in a new phase in our bilateral relationship.

This Compact, as amended in 2003, provides the framework for much of our bilateral relationship. Under the Amended Compact, most citizens of the FSM may live, study, and work in the United States without a visa. In addition, the United States is committed to providing over \$107 million per year in direct economic assistance and Trust Fund contributions through 2023. After U.S. contributions to the Trust Fund and direct sectoral assistance under the Amended Compact end in 2023, the FSM will begin to draw distributions from the Trust Fund. The FSM faces a critical juncture as it shifts from direct financial assistance to the use of Trust Fund distributions. If confirmed, I will work constructively with the government of the FSM, encouraging it to make the structural reforms needed to ensure its sustained development beyond 2023.

While U.S. contributions to the Trust Fund and direct economic assistance under the Amended Compact will end in 2023, the Amended Compact itself does not expire. Unless otherwise stated, the Amended Compact will remain in effect until terminated according to its terms. If confirmed, I will do my best to reassure

the people of the FSM that the United States remains committed to assisting the FSM as it faces the challenges of the coming decades.

The FSM is an important partner in our Pacific engagement. The mutual security of our two nations is an underlying element of our special relationship. The FSM has no military of its own. Under the Amended Compact, the United States is committed to defending Micronesia and its people from attack or threats as the United States and its citizens are defended. If confirmed I will work closely with the Government of FSM to highlight our strong support for regional security.

The importance of our strong relationship with the FSM extends beyond defense considerations. The FSM is a loyal friend and ally in many other ways. For example, the FSM votes with the United States at the United Nations over 90 percent of the time. Our people-to-people ties also continue to grow. There are 47 Peace Corps Volunteers currently serving in the FSM. If confirmed, I will draw on my Peace Corps experience to work with the Peace Corps and the Government of the FSM to enhance the success of this valuable program.

Finally, the FSM is among the small island nations already impacted by climate change. If confirmed, I will support efforts of the U.S. Mission to further assist the FSM in adapting to the impacts of climate change, including by integrating climate change adaptation considerations into long-term planning.

In closing, I can think of no greater honor or opportunity than to lead the U.S. Mission in the FSM and work with our valued Micronesian friends on these and other important issues. It is a time of renewed focus on our role in the Pacific,

and I am excited to be part of it. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and I am happy to answer your questions.