

Remarks for Director of Intergovernmental Affairs
Douglas Hoelscher

Co-Chair of the Interagency Group on Insular Areas
for American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin
Islands

Senior Plenary Session
Executive Office Building (EEOB)
Tuesday, February 11, 2020 @ 1:30 p.m. EST

Welcome:

Good morning everyone. Thank you, Secretary Bernhardt, for your remarks and introduction. It is also an honor for me to co-chair this the 2020 Senior Plenary Session of the Interagency Group on Insular Areas, also known as IGIA

Right after last year's IGIA, Assistant Secretary Domenech, myself and our staffs met to review the issues you raised. We wanted to prioritize those issues that would have severe impacts if not immediately addressed and those that provided opportunities to implement administrative fixes.

We heard you on the "Medicaid Cliff" and the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) responded with various administrative actions that provided flexibility and the Administration supported legislation that adjusted the FMAP and provided additional Medicaid funding. There is still more work to be done, but I believe it is safe to say that no one went over the cliff and crashed and burned.

This year's theme is economic development and it provides us with an additional context to address the long-standing issues of immigration, taxation, health care, workforce investment, infrastructure funding, and private sector development.

I am looking forward to hearing from you on these issues, but every year we are reminded of your vulnerability to natural disasters. Resilience is a topic that should always be addressed so that our investments are never made in vain. We have again invited FEMA to present on resilience.

The President continues to stress the importance of strengthening America first and that territories have always been and remain an important part of those efforts.

Recognizing our limits on time, we only have time for presentations on a couple of topics, HOWEVER, I do encourage you to submit issues and information to our OIA team so that everything may be submitted in the IGIA record and submitted to me at the White House for awareness, review, and subsequent discussions.

I look forward to our meeting today and working together going forward to help Americans in American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands.

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