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Interagency Group on Insular Areas Holds Annual Meeting

Plenary session of island leaders and federal officials held at Interior;

Interviews with Island Leaders Available for Download [HERE](#).

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Governors and Congressional representatives from each of the U.S. Insular Areas gathered in Washington this week to attend their annual meeting with senior-level federal officials to discuss issues of importance to American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The 2013 Senior Plenary Session of the Interagency Group on Insular Areas (IGIA), hosting by the Department of the Interior, was co-chaired by White House Director of Intergovernmental Affairs David Agnew and Deputy Secretary of the Interior David J. Hayes. The island governors also were in Washington to attend the annual National Governors' Conference, the Western Governors Breakfast, and U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meetings, all of which preceded the IGIA Plenary Session.

Various Governors and Congressional representatives from the U.S. Insular Areas provided remarks and statements unique to their island and highlighted useful ideas and goals for their constituencies that developed from the sessions at this year's annual meeting. Those remarks are posted [HERE](#) for downloading by the media and the public.

In addition, the Co-chairs provided important remarks at the annual meeting.

“This annual meeting and its important workshops underscore the collaborative progress we are making to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of our people in American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the US Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico,” said Deputy Secretary David J. Hayes. “It is my hope that folks who have traveled thousands of miles to be here this week will work to identify other areas and initiatives that we can employ to do an even better job moving forward to ensure that resources can be found to advance the priorities of these Insular Areas.”

“It was a pleasure meeting with the governors and the representatives at this IGIA where we held serious conversations about addressing the issues facing the US Insular Areas,” said Eileen Sobeck, the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas. “We were especially pleased to welcome newly elected Governor Moliga of American Samoa. This year we are placing special focus on following-up with our sister federal agencies, the governors and the delegates to Congress throughout the year to continue moving forward on the issues.”

“IGIA provides a great opportunity for agencies and the White House to hear directly about the challenges and priorities of the US Insular Areas,” said David Agnew, Director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. “Thank you to the governors, representatives and their staffs for the productive discussion, which will help inform our policies in the weeks and months to come.”

Sobeck co-chaired the IGIA with Deputy Secretary David Hayes on behalf of Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. Charles Galbraith, White House Associate Director – Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, co-chaired the IGIA with David Agnew, Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs. Interior Deputy Secretary David J. Hayes and Director Agnew gave opening remarks at the Plenary Session.

This year’s federal presentations included:

- **Department of Commerce – Economics and Statistics Administration**
Formulating Economic Policy in the Territories Using the GDP
Dr. Mark Doms, Under Secretary for Economic Affairs
- **Health and Human Services – Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)**
CMS Hospital Surveys – Keeping in Good Standing
Thomas Hamilton, Director, Survey and Certification, Clinical Standards & Quality
- **USDA – Rural Development**
Leveraging USDA Programs to Advance Infrastructure & Development Projects
Jessica Zufolo, Deputy Administrator
Chris Kanazawa, State Director, Hawaii and Western Pacific
- **National Science Foundation – Education and Human Resources**
Partnering with the National Science Foundation to Support Policy Initiatives
John Cruickshank, Senior Program Analyst, Directorate for Education and Human Resources
- **Homeland Security – Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**
Sharing Experiences Learned from Sandy and Others To Help the Territories
Michael Byrne, Federal Coordinating Officer for Sandy
National Incident Management Assistance Team Leader, FEMA
- **USDA - National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)**
NIFA Food and Agricultural Sciences Programs in the Insular Areas

Dr. Saleia Afele-Fa'amuli, National Program Leader

An important compilation shared at the meeting was the IGIA briefing book which contains contributions from all participating federal agencies and highlights their respective work and programs in the territories and freely associated states.

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