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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas

Interior Proposes Legislation to Improve Reliable and Sustainable Air Service in American Samoa

WASHINGTON, D.C. (October 16, 2015) - Interior Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia'aina today sent a letter to U.S. Senate and House congressional leadership proposing draft legislation to improve transportation within the U.S. territory of American Samoa. The bill would provide reliable and sustainable air service between Tutuila and the Manu'a Islands.

"The lack of reliable transportation between these islands inhibits tourism, impedes access to education and health care services and generally limits opportunities for full economic potential within the territory," said Assistant Secretary Esther Kia'aina. "The transportation needs between Tutuila and Manu'a were evident to me on my trip to American Samoa last November. While we have provided almost \$9 million to procure a ferry for passenger/cargo transportation, air transportation continues to play a vital role in the daily activities of the people."

Currently, there are no U.S. air carriers providing service within American Samoa between Tutuila and Manu'a. The U.S. Department of Transportation has authorized a foreign air carrier to provide this emergency service capability between the islands. However, under current U.S. law, the foreign air carrier is required to submit an application every 30 days. This legislation proposes an exemption to this requirement.

The Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas carries out the administrative responsibilities of the Secretary of the Interior in coordinating federal policy for the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and administering and overseeing U.S. federal assistance to the Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau

under the Compacts of Free Association. The Assistant Secretary executes these responsibilities through the Office of Insular Affairs.

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