

## **FSM Information Services**

### **Press Release**

#### **Due to COVID-19 the FSM Consulate in Portland is Closed Indefinitely; FSM Citizens in the U.S. are Explicitly Encouraged to Comply with Social Distancing Rules & Avoid Public Gatherings**

PORTLAND, Oregon—On July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Honorable Joe Enlet, Consul General of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) based in the U.S. State of Oregon, sent a request to the Department of Foreign Affairs that the Consulate Office be closed indefinitely, with essential services such as passport applications to continue on a limited basis through remote liaising. The reasons cited for the request include complications posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic. The FSM National Government is aware that the United States is presently undergoing significant increases of COVID-19 cases, including in States that FSM citizens predominantly reside in e.g. the State of Oregon, the State of Washington, the State of North Carolina, the State of Ohio, and the State of Texas. FSM citizens living in the U.S. are explicitly encouraged to comply with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention’s social distancing guidelines, to avoid large public gatherings, and to wear a mask when one is at work or shopping for essential goods.

For statistical purposes, FSM citizens are placed within the Pacific Islander category within U.S. Census and American Community Survey data etc. Pacific Islanders are suffering from the highest rate of COVID-19, far outnumbering other categories such as Asian, Black, White, or Hispanic residents of the United States of America. As of July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020, the FSM National Government is aware of at least sixty-four (64) FSM citizens in the U.S. mainland who have been confirmed to have contracted a case of COVID-19. The FSM National Government is further aware of at least 11 FSM citizens in the U.S. who have passed away from the virus. The numbers the FSM National Government can confirm are likely lower than the actual total number of cases and deaths, as the cases and numbers identified within this release have been directly reported to the FSM National Government.

“I want to emphasize that these numbers are merely what is reported to the FSM Consulate and what we have been able to confirm ourselves,” Consul General Enlet wrote in a communication to the Department of Foreign Affairs. “There are over sixty (60) cases that our partners...have confirmed for the State of Hawaii alone.”

“This is an opportune time to capitalize on the collaborative effort,” the Honorable Jackson Soram, Deputy Chief of Mission of the FSM Embassy in the U.S., said in a statement. “Through the CARES Act, there is funding available to FSM groups and communities in the U.S. to address COVID-19. So far, the only active participant in utilizing these funds is the Manelu Organization of Guam (aka the Micronesian Resource Center One Stop Shop). The Embassy and its Consulates

encourage Micronesians communities to reach out to the Embassy if they wish to apply for these funds to help keep our citizens and their communities safe from the coronavirus.”

“Staff will be doing their work remotely,” Consul General Enlet said. “We will continue to advocate for FSM citizens and assist with CARES Act grant assistance. We will also process passports and other necessary documents for our citizens, but on a very limited basis.”

The FSM Consulate in Oregon has been working very closely with State and County officials to provide crucial information and services to FSM citizens regarding COVID-19. The FSM National Government appreciates the assistance provided by the Honorable Kate Brown, Governor of the State of Oregon, as well as the assistance provided by the Oregon Health Authority, the Oregon Department of Human Services, and the State of Washington’s Employment Security Department, among others, in ensuring FSM citizens have access to personal protection equipment (PPE), COVID-19 testing, and funding for local partner organizations such as the COFA Alliance National Network (CANN).

Citizens living in the FSM Consulate in Oregon’s jurisdiction who are seeking the Consulate’s services are advised that, since the office itself is presently closed, if they wish to contact the FSM National Government that the best means to do so is by contacting the FSM Embassy in Washington, D.C.

The FSM Embassy to the United States based in Washington, D.C. is able to address any queries from FSM citizens residing in the United States. Their phone number is 202-223-4383, and their email webform is here: <http://www.fsmembassydc.org/webform/contact-us>

“I have asked all Consulate employees to get tested for COVID-19, along with their families,” Consul General Enlet said. “Fortunately, there are free testing sites in the Portland area to which we have access. FSM citizens in the U.S. are encouraged to contact their Embassy if they need information on COVID-19 testing sites in their community.”

“My fellow Micronesians, particularly those of you abroad,” President Panuelo said in a statement, “please comply with all social distancing guidelines provided by the U.S. CDC and your local State Government. Wear a mask at all times that you are in public, and avoid going out in public as much as you can. This isn’t the time for basketball tournaments in Texas, baseball leagues in Nebraska, or feasts in Portland. This is the time to be with your families at home. These are hard times, but the effort you make to protect yourself and your family by avoiding public gatherings and wearing a mask when you must be in public will help keep you and your communities safe.”