



BARACK OBAMA: LEADERSHIP FOR GUAM

Growing up in Hawaii, Barack Obama understands firsthand the unique concerns of the Pacific Islanders. As president, he will make sure these issues are addressed with the full commitment of the federal government. Obama has built a record in the U.S. Senate of support for Pacific Islanders – from advocating for Guam War claims to addressing the health care challenges that face Pacific Island communities, to recognizing the status of Native Hawaiians. Obama recognizes the U.S. has a special relationship with Guam and the Chamorro people.

Military Build-Up on Guam: Barack Obama understands the genuine concerns many people have about the military build up. In an Obama administration, the voices of the people of Guam will be heard and their needs considered as part of any increased military investment on the island. Social and cultural concerns should be given equal consideration to economic concerns as the future of the U.S. military presence in Guam is planned. As president, Obama will work to strike a balance which ensures both that the people of Guam benefit and that our national security interests in the Pacific are protected.

To deal with specific economic development issues associated with the military build-up, Obama will:

- Support local hiring preferences and community benefit agreements to ensure training and apprenticeship opportunities on federally funded construction projects. He believes that federal procurement of goods and services must be an opportunity for local Guam entrepreneurs and small businesses. He is committed to enforcing competitive bidding on government contracts with appropriate competitive small business set-asides to assist Guam's small businesses. Active participation by Guam employees and Guam contractors should be a priority.
- Ensure the investments that will be made and the skills developed will be transferable to civilian purposes as well as military purposes. Guam has significant civilian infrastructure needs. The improvement of transportation, power, water, and waste disposal systems -- as well as residents trained in the technologies to develop these systems -- will help Guam diversify its economic base. The goal for Guam is an economy that is not too dependent on any one sector and is resilient even as the tourism industry fluctuates and as nature periodically rears its destructive forces on the island.

Compact-Impact Reimbursements: The federal government owes Guam hundreds of millions of dollars in the form of compact-impact reimbursements. The leadership of Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo on this issue has shown that there are creative ways in which this issue may be addressed. President Bush missed an opportunity to offset past unreimbursed Compact Impact expenses against current GovGuam obligations to the federal government. There may be an opportunity to revisit this as part of the 2009 renegotiation of the Compacts of Free Association with the Republic of Palau, and Obama looks forward to working with Congresswoman Bordallo at that time to address these issues.

Health Care: Guam is experiencing a health care crisis largely due to insufficient resources to serve every patient. The only hospital on Guam lacks the proper hospital beds, emergency room space, and funding for medical equipment that it needs. Obama supports efforts to improve health care for Guam and ensure that they get the much-needed relief and hospital resources to meet the needs of the island's growing population. In the U.S. Senate, Obama cosponsored legislation that put new emphasis on health disparities by directing the Department of Health and Human Services to collect and report health care data by race and ethnicity, as well as by geographic and socioeconomic status and level of health literacy.

K-12 Education: Many of Guam's schools are in a state of disrepair and continually lack the funding to adequately educate Guam's 30,000 youth. An Obama administration will be committed to working with the local school districts in the territories, and the Guam Public School System, to ensure adequate funding and the flexibility of consolidation under the No Child Left Behind Act to meet targeted needs. Flexibility in the system is key to providing all of our children the education necessary to prepare them for the challenges of the 21st Century.

War Reparations: After 32 months of occupation by Imperial Japan, U.S. forces liberated Guam in 1944. The U.S. Congress passed a law intending to provide relief to the people of Guam, but that relief never came. In 2004, the Guam War Crimes Commission presented a report finding the people of Guam failed to receive the compensation promised to them. The House of Representatives took an important step toward that end last year when it passed the Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and a strong supporter of Obama, has worked to move this important bill through the Committee to ensure passage in the Senate and ultimately make good on the promises made to the people of Guam over 64 years ago.

Safeguard the Pacific Islands from Disasters: Barack Obama supports efforts to strengthen the federal government's Pacific Tsunami Warning Center. He also has been a vigorous advocate of bolstering our nation's ability to respond to acts of terrorism and natural disasters, including typhoons, in a swift and effective manner. As president, he will work to ensure that the Pacific Islands are adequately prepared for disasters.