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The Compacts of Free Association and Living in the United States

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As provided for under the Compacts of Free Association, referred to as the Compact or the COFA, individuals from the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau (Palau) may be admitted to the United States and its territories and possessions as nonimmigrants to lawfully engage in occupations and establish residence for duration of stay. The FSM, the RMI, and Palau are referred to collectively as the freely associated states (FAS).

On March 9, 2024, H.R. 4366 or the 2024 Consolidated Appropriations Act which included the Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2024 was signed by President Biden and became Public Law 118-42, extending financial provisions of the Compact and updating federal programs services for another twenty years. Find the full text of Public Law 118-42 [here](#).

Find links to guidance and fact sheets from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the Social Security Administration (SSA), and other agencies to support citizens from the FSM, RMI, and Palau who are living, working, and going to school in the United States per the Compacts of Free Association.

Education

- NEW! Effective July 1, 2024, under Public Law 118-42, certain public institutions of higher education may not charge more than in-state tuition to students who are citizens of the FSM, RMI, and Palau. Read more in the [Federal Student Aid Electronic Announcement ID: General-24-50](#).
- All FSM, RMI, and Palau students are also eligible for Pell Grants, Federal Work Study (FWS), and the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) whether studying in the United States or at institutions of higher education in any of the three freely associated states. See the [Federal Student Aid Electronic Announcement ID: General-24-50](#).

Health and Human Services

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) – Effective under Public Law 118-42, signed by the President on March 9, 2024, federal TANF funds may now be used to assist eligible COFA citizens residing in the state by making them “qualified aliens” pursuant to 8 U.S.C. 16411 and lifting other restrictions.
 - See [ACF-OFA-PI-24-02](#), May 29, 2024
 - Visit the [HHS-ACF Office of Family Assistance](#) webpage.

Homeland Security – FEMA

- FEMA Disaster Assistance – [Maui COFA Wildfire Survivors Now Eligible for Assistance](#), NR-040, April 2, 2024
- [Q&A on COFA Eligibility](#) for FEMA Benefits, April 3, 2024

Homeland Security – SAVE

Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) is a service that helps federal, state, and local benefit-issuing agencies, institutions, and licensing agencies determine the immigration status of benefit applicants so only those entitled to benefits receive them.

Read the Guide to Understanding SAVE Verification here:

<https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/guides/SAVE-Guide%20to%20Understanding%20SAVE%20Verification%20Responses.pdf>

Homeland Security – USCIS

- [USCIS Fact Sheet – Status of Citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands](#)
- [USCIS Fact Sheet – Status of Citizens of the Republic of Palau](#)
- USCIS Indefinite Work Authorization - [Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Palau | USCIS](#)
 - The EAD is not required but can be helpful. Apply for the EAD here: [Employment Authorization Document](#)
- USCIS Handbook for Employers – [List A Documents that Establish Identity and Employment Authorization](#) – FSM and RMI.

Social Security Administration

- Social Security Administration Program Operations Manual System –

[Evidence of Lawful Status for COFA Citizens.](#)

- [Supplemental Security Income Eligibility for COFA Citizens \(SSA Instructions, 6/5/2024, pdf\)](#)

USDA Nutrition Assistance

Citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau who are lawfully residing in the any of the fifty states of the United States may now be eligible for the Nutrition Assistance Program including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

- [Nutritional Assistance Program \(NAP\)](#), September 16, 2024 (Provisions in the law and territory guidance)
- [SNAP Provisions](#) in Public Law 118-42
- [Policy Memo](#), July 12, 2024
- For more information, please visit [SNAP Eligibility for Non-Citizens](#).

Find more information [at this link](#) about Public Law 118-42, the Compacts of Free Association, and other laws and authorities that guide the work of the Office of Insular Affairs.

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