

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2023 COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION AMENDMENT ACT

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### Summary of the New and Restored U.S. Domestic Programs for Palauan citizens residing in the U.S.

The Embassy of the Republic of Palau continues to work closely with relevant U.S. Federal Agencies to ensure that new and restored benefits under the Compact of Free Association Amendment Act of 2023, signed into law on March 9, 2024, are made available and accessible to citizens of Palau who reside lawfully in the U.S. The Embassy will continue to work with these relevant U.S. agencies for a timely implementation of these programs and benefits.

The following update provides a summary of new programs and benefits as well as those that were discontinued in previous administrations and restored with the COFA Amendment Act of 2023. The Embassy will continue to provide updates as they become available.

### DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

On July 1, 2023, citizens of Palau attending any public institution of higher learning (public colleges or universities) in the U.S. became eligible to pay in-state tuition. Other benefits include:

- Federal Supplemental Opportunity Grants (FSEOG)
- Federal Work Study Program (FWS).

The Embassy continues to monitor public colleges and universities in the U.S. comply with this mandate. Please contact the Embassy if you have been denied or know someone who has been denied this opportunity.

### DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) PROGRAMS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is required to collaborate with the Government of the Republic of Palau to enhance healthcare benefits for U.S. Armed Forces veterans residing in Palau. According to the COFA Amendment Act of 2023, an agreement outlining these provisions must be signed and implemented by March 2025.

Currently, it has been established that U.S. military veterans living in Palau will receive healthcare coverage. If specific medical care is unavailable locally, travel expenses for treatment

out of country will be covered. In addition to healthcare, ongoing discussions between Palau and the U.S. are exploring additional benefits for veterans, such as access to VA Home Loans. At present, these loans are only available to veterans living in the U.S. mainland or its Territories.

To assess the availability and quality of healthcare services in Palau, representatives from both the Palauan and U.S. governments — including officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of State, and Department of Interior — have conducted several virtual meetings. The first in-person meeting took place on Guam on December 9, 2024. While some progress was made during this meeting, several issues remain unresolved before a final agreement can be reached. The Embassy will continue to engage with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, State, and Interior for further updates.

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS) PROGRAMS

There are three assistant programs that the Department of Health and Human Services offers to citizens of Palau:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and
- Social Services Block Grants (SSBG).

While these domestic programs are offered to citizens of Palau, they are administered by States, which have their own requirements that Palau and other COFA citizens must meet. The Department of Health and Human Services has issued guidance to state-level agencies responsible for awarding these benefits for which Palauans and other FAS citizens are now eligible.

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) PROGRAMS

Under the Compact of Free Association Amendment Act of 2023, citizens of Palau are eligible to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This is the program formerly known as Food Stamps, from which Palauan citizens were excluded in 1996.

SNAP provides food benefits to low-income families to assist them in their grocery budget for affordable and nutritious for their health and well-being. Citizens of Palau, who are lawfully residing in the U.S. are again eligible to apply for SNAP. A lawfully residing citizen is a person with a valid passport and an I-94. [Here is the link to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) for more information and to apply.](#)

## [SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION \(SSA\) PROGRAMS](#)

Supplemental Social Security Income (SSI) provides monthly payments to individuals with disabilities and older adults who have no income or resources. Palauans were excluded from this program in 1996. Based on the Compact Amendment Act of 2023, citizens of Palau are now able to apply for this benefit.

The Embassy of the Republic of Palau will look further into this issue and provide updates. Citizens of Palau in the U.S. with disabilities and have low income, can contact the Social Security Administration office in your state to see if you meet the eligibility requirements for this benefit.

## [FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY \(FEMA\) PROGRAMS](#)

While the Governments of Palau and the U.S. continue discussions on FEMA assistance in Palau in the event of natural disasters, it is appreciated that citizens of Palau residing in the U.S. are now eligible for FEMA assistance. Those citizens of Palau who own homes or properties damaged during a storm or other natural disaster can now claim damages and receive some help from FEMA.

## [FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF PALAU](#)

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## [ADDITIONAL ONLINE SOURCES YOU CAN CHECK FOR UPDATES](#)

[USA.gov](http://USA.gov)

[Department of Education](#)

[Department of Interior](#)

[Social Security Administration](#)

[Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

[Department of Health and Human Services](#)

[Department of Agriculture](#)

[Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#)

