

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 23-53

RE: C.R. NO. 23-97/H&SA

SUBJECT: A REOLUTION TO CONFIRM THE NOMINATION
OF MR. JASON POLL TO SERVE AS A MEMBER
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE SOCIAL
SECURITY ADMINISTRATION OF THE
FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA,
REPRESENTING THE STATE OF CHUUK.”,

April 05, 2024

The Honorable Esmond B. Moses
Speaker, Twenty-Third Congress
Federated States of Micronesia
Second Special Session, 2024

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Health and Social Affairs to which was
referred C.R. NO. 23-97, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION TO CONFIRM THE NOMINATION OF MR. JASON POLL
TO SERVE AS A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE SOCIAL
SECURITY ADMINISTRATION OF THE FEDERATED STATES OF
MICRONESIA, REPRESENTING THE STATE OF CHUUK.”,

begs leave to report as follows:

The intent and purpose of this resolution are expressed in the
title.

Your Committee has reviewed the qualifications and work
experience of the nominee, Mr. Jason Poll and finds him
qualified to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees of the

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Social Security Administration representing the state of Chuuk. The Office of the President transmitted a recommendation from the Governor of Chuuk, Governor Narruhn, in support of the nominee.

Your Committee held a hearing on January 22, 2024.

SUMMARY OF THE JANUARY 22, 2024 COMMITTEE HEARING ON C.R. 23-97:

Congressional Members present at the January 22, 2024 Hearing: Chairwoman Perpetua S. Konman and Senator Fabian Nimea.

The nominee Mr. Jason Poll was present at the January 22, 2024 Committee hearing to testify.

Chairwoman Perpetua S. Konman opened the hearing by welcoming congressional members and the nominee, Mr. Jason Poll, to the hearing. Chairwoman briefly detailed the nominee's education and professional background and previous experience serving as a board member. Chairwoman asked the nominee what was he able to accomplish in his previous capacities as a board member of the Maritime Authority, Chuuk Coconut Authority and the FSM Bank.

Mr. Poll thanked Committee for convening the hearing on his nomination in his opening statement. Mr. Poll testified in response to Chairwoman Konman's question that he during his tenure as a board member on the Chuuk Coconut Authority, he and his colleagues accomplished paying the authority's debt of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Mr. Poll also clarified to the Committee that he was role as the Executive Director of the Chuuk Environmental Protection Agency ended in 2021 and subsequently he resumed his previous position as Deputy Director.

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Chairwoman Konman asked Mr. Poll to specify what rules did he put in place as a board member of the Chuuk Coconut Authority to get the debt paid off.

Mr. Poll explained there was wasteful and improper use of Compact I funds that was appropriated to the Coconut Authority, with overspending by the office, in terms of over ordering of chemicals, perfumes, soaps and detergents. Mr. Poll discussed how there were related issues of non-payment of bills, which led to further disorder in the office. Mr. Poll stated the plan to address the debt was to pay off the companies in India first and implementation of a payment plan and payment was completed within 8 years.

Chairwoman Konman discussed how the Social Security Administration (SSA) is experiencing issues of long-term sustainability, particularly in terms of dependence upon national government subsidies and withdrawal from the SSA Trust Fund in order to cover operations and current beneficiaries payouts. Chairwoman asked the nominee that if he were confirmed, what efforts would he put in place to address this issue. Chairwoman also asked the nominee to opine on what suggestions he has to improve implementation and enforcement of SSA contributions.

Mr. Poll testified in response that he would seek the opinion of experts, including economists and financial advisors, and review the advice in consideration of moving the board in the right direction.

The nominee was questioned on what he would do differently given the numerous actuarial studies and reported completed on the SSA sustainability, and the fact that the SSA Board has financial advisors in place, yet the SSA is still unable to sustain itself among other issues.

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Mr. Poll testified that he will have to look at the current policies and rules governing the SSA before making a decision. Mr. Poll explained that he will need to do proper research on what is currently occurring at the SSA making SSA benefit payouts higher.

Senator Nimea asked the nominee to opine on what he thinks the role of the SSA is in supporting the overall welfare and economic development of the country.

Mr. Poll testified in response that the purpose of the SSA is to try and help retirees in getting a fair and equal amount of payout, but also taking into consideration how the system can be sustained provide payout in the best way possible. Mr. Poll expressed that hopefully the Board can explore better options for investments on SSA contributions, so that the earned profits on the SSA investments increase and thus retirees can get higher benefit payouts.

Senator Nimea asked the nominee to speak to how he envisions the future of the social security system and what role he would play in shaping that future.

The nominee responded he will focus on investments and earning more from investments.

Senator Nimea asked the nominee if he was aware of the divergent and multiple challenges facing the SSA and reiterated Chairwoman Konman's question on the need to address sustainability. The Senator discussed how the SSA pays out more benefits than the administration generates in contributions, and recognized that one of the root causes is lack of collection enforcement. Senator Nimea also asked the nominee to share with the Committee what specific strategies and steps he would work with other

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members of the SSA board to implement address this challenge which stems from this financial imbalance. Chairwoman Konman also followed-up with a question on what specific skills would he look for in advisors.

Mr. Poll testified that he must do more research to fully appreciate and understand the issues at play, as he has limited knowledge. The nominee expressed that he would try his best, and get the necessary experts and proper advisors so the board can have a plan to address the financial prospects of the SSA both now and in the future. Mr. Poll added that he will need professionals from Chairman Nimea field (business management) among others in order to support and progress the health of the SSA.

Senator Nimea also questioned the nominee on what steps he would take to make sure SSA benefits accessible for all FSM citizens, including marginalized populations.

Mr. Poll testified he would focus on contribution collection and increase education to small businesses. Mr. Poll explained that he would also seek the input from the social security office in Chuuk state and Governor of Chuuk, due to their substantive experience in this field. Mr. Poll reiterated that he will need to assess the current policies and rules in place, as do not need to repeat the same policies.

Senator Nimea asked the nominee to share with the Committee how he plans on dealing with the evolving need of the workforce in the FSM and need for retirement planning.

Mr. Poll testified that he would like to see if he can increase benefit payouts in the social security, if there is room for an increase, and consult with experts to ensure the Board makes well-informed decisions.

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Lastly, Mr. Poll was asked what skills and experience he can bring to the table to benefit the SSA and current SSA board, and how he would manage the demands of his current position as Deputy Director of the EPA with being a Board Member of the SSA, if confirmed.

Mr. Poll testified he would be able to manage his time effectively to perform both roles. Mr. Poll emphasized that he is a man of the people. Mr. Poll explained that his perspective is to be responsive to those in need and stated that he hears directly from the lower income people of Weno island and neighboring islands on SSA issues. Mr. Poll ended his testimony stating that if given time and a chance, he is ready to serve and will do his best.

Senator Nimea thanked the nominee for his testimony at the hearing and shedding light on his qualifications for the position.

Chairwoman Konman thanked the nominee for answering the call to serve on the Board of Trustees for the SSA and reflected on the nominee's testimony of his private sector experience that can be used to improve the SSA office in Chuuk. Chairwoman also expressed appreciation for his work to help the people of Chuuk. and adjourned the committee hearing.

CONCLUSION

The Committee on Health & Social Affairs has reviewed C.R. No. 23-97, and is in accord with the intent and purpose of C.R. No. 23-97. Your Committee recommends that C.R. 23-97 is placed on the resolution calendar for adoption.

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Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Perpetua S. Konman
Perpetua S. Konman, chair

/s/ Merlynn Abello-Alfonso
Merlynn Abello-Alfonso, vice chair

/s/ Tiwiter Aritos
Tiwiter Aritos, member

/s/ Joseph J. Urusemal
Joseph J. Urusemal, member