

and that what Congress has established for our Territory is necessary for economic stability," Faleomavaega concluded.

[From the Saipan Tribune, Jan. 11, 2007]

WHY IS AMERICAN SAMOA EXEMPTED FROM WAGE HIKE?

WASHINGTON.—Republican leadership aides are accusing the Democrats of using a double standard by imposing the higher minimum wage on the Northern Mariana Islands—considered a Republican protectorate—while continuing to exempt a Democratic territory, American Samoa.

Under a Democrat-backed legislation that is now before the House of Representatives, employers on the Northern Mariana Islands would have to pay workers the federal minimum wage. American Samoa and the tuna industry that dominates its economy would, on the other hand, remain free to pay wages less than half the bill's new mandatory minimum.

Democrats have long tried to pull the Northern Marianas under the umbrella of U.S. labor law, accusing the island's government and its industry leaders of coddling sweatshops and turning a blind eye to forced abortions and indentured servitude.

Samoa has escaped such notoriety, and its low-wage canneries have a protector of a different political stripe, Democratic delegate Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, whose campaign coffers have been well stocked by the tuna industry that virtually runs his island's economy.

Faleomavaega has long made it clear he did not believe his island's economy could handle the federal minimum wage, issuing statements of sympathy for a Samoan tuna industry competing with South American and Asian canneries paying workers about 67 cents an hour.

The message got through to House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller, D-Calif., the author of the minimum wage bill who included the Marianas but not Samoa, according to committee aides. The aides said the Samoan economy does not have the diversity and vibrance to handle the mainland's minimum wage, nor does the island have anything like the labor rights abuses Miller claims of the Marianas.

The wage bill coming to a vote this Wednesday (Thursday on Saipan) would raise the federal minimum from \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 over two years, the first such increase since 1997. The 10-year stretch between wage increases is the longest since the mandatory minimum was created, and passage is expected to be overwhelming.

By including the Northern Marianas, Democrats say they hope to put an end to abusive sweatshops, especially in the garment industry. "I have been trying to fix the deplorable situation in the Northern Marianas since I first held hearings on the issue in 1992, 15 years ago," Miller said. "But under Republican control, the House never even held a hearing."

American Samoa has had a smattering of its own negative publicity, and an Education and Labor Committee aide said Monday that Miller probably will seek a review of the island's labor relations.

Last month, the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii upheld the conviction of a Korean sweatshop owner, who held 17 workers in involuntary servitude in American Samoa, imprisoning them in his garment factory compound.

But in American Samoa the tuna industry rules the roost. Canneries employ nearly 5,000 workers on the island, or 40 percent of the work force, paying on average \$3.60 an hour, compared to \$7.99 an hour for Samoan government employees. Samoan minimum wage rates are set by federal industry com-

mittees, which visit the island every two years.

Faleomavaega's aides said Monday that the delegate was in American Samoa for the opening session of the island's government and would not comment.

When StarKist lobbied in the past to prevent small minimum wage hikes, Faleomavaega denounced the efforts.

"StarKist is a billion dollar a year company," he said after a 2003 meeting with StarKist and Del Monte executives. "It is not fair to pay a corporate executive \$65 million a year while a cannery worker only makes \$3.60 per hour."

But after the same meeting, Faleomavaega said he understood that the Samoan canneries were facing severe wage competition from South American and Asian competitors.

Department of Interior testimony last year before the Senate noted that canneries in Thailand and the Philippines were paying their workers about 67 cents an hour. If the canneries left American Samoa en masse, the impact would be devastating, leaving Samoans wards of the federal welfare state, warned David Cohen, deputy assistant secretary of the interior for insular affairs.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Thank you so very much. I am glad you came to the floor to share that. There is nothing like a representative of the American people that the Republican minority seems to be so concerned about all of a sudden, sharing misinformation, that the representative of the people comes to the floor to set the record straight.

The good thing about it is that we are in the majority right now, Mr. Speaker, and knowing that the issue will continue to receive the kind of attention it deserves, but making sure that mistruths are ironed out here in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, so that when we reflect on the facts, as I speak so fondly of, that we are on the right side of those facts.

I would also like to share with the Members, since we try to provide information to the Members, mainly, and hopefully we will get to the American people, we want to make sure that Americans stay tuned on behalf of the rest of this 100-hour agenda that we are carrying out right now, with the Student Loan Relief Act, which is on Wednesday; and repealing big oil subsidies, that will be coming up; and also investing in renewable fuels, that will be coming up.

All of this along these lines are going to make us a stronger America, a better America. These are issues, or issues that have been presented before Congress before, some of them passed on a committee level. Even some of them have passed in some amendatory form in a bigger package of legislation this House of Representatives, out of this House of Representatives. It should not be a surprise or a shock.

As I mention it here now, well before next week, I am pretty sure we will have some Members on the other side of the aisle who will come up and say, you know, I was walking down the hall and someone told me we were taking tax breaks away from the big oil companies. What happened to the hearing?

Well, I can tell you not only prior to the election, I know for sure I said it

here on the floor in the last Congress, the 109th Congress, in the last Congress. If they did not know, if they did not know that this was going to take place, prior to the election, then I suggest you pick up a newspaper.

We notice that some people don't read the newspaper here in Washington D.C., but that is another commentary. But I am excited about the fact that we are getting some of these issues done.

We always encourage the Members to log onto [www.speaker.gov](http://www.speaker.gov). You can get any information that is coming up, if you want to learn more about the 100-hour agenda, but I would say if you want to e-mail the 30-Something Working Group, [www.speaker.gov/30something](http://www.speaker.gov/30something), and you can send us information on things that you are concerned about or questions that you may have.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to thank the Democratic leadership for allowing me to come down to the floor. The 30-Something Working Group will be back on floor next week. We want to not only ask Members but also staff and all Americans to celebrate the memory and the legacy of Dr. King and his entire family along with Mrs. Coretta Scott King for their contributions, not only to this country but to the world.

As we carry out this day of service that the King Center for the Advancement of Nonviolence calls for every year, try to create some sort of public service project within your family of something that you can do for somebody else, because that is what his philosophy was all about.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. LEVIN (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today.

Mr. MCHUGH (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of official business.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. HOLT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCHIFF, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. TAYLOR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HOLT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. WOLF) to revise and extend