

01/01/2020

**Mr. Douglas W. Domenech**

Assistant Secretary Insular and International Affairs  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

**RE: An Injustice to the People of Guam**

Dear Assistant Secretary Domenech,

*Buenas Yan Hafa Adai* (Greetings from Guam)! We the undersigned, write to you to express our frustrations with the 2018 Farm Bill. Since its passage last year, we have approached our local lawmakers to share our concerns. As a result, the 35<sup>th</sup> Guam Legislature voted to make the enforcement of the federal cockfighting ban the lowest priority of the Government of Guam. As Guam battles a meth epidemic, a rise in crime, all while being short on personnel, it was wise to put this unfunded mandate on the bottom of the list. We have also attempted to seek our Congressman's support to stand up for us but one year later, have yet to avail any relief. One year later, many of us feel neglected - especially since our opinion was never requested before the US Federal government decided to impede on a pastime that our ancestors have passed down to us.

Frustrated and seeking a resolve, we turn to you, the Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior, the one responsible for coordinating federal policy for the Territory of Guam as we seek an avenue to mitigate this injustice. We would also like to point out that we are not anti-America. If anything, Guam is home to some of the most patriotic Americans in the land. Many of us, our sons, daughters, relatives, have served our country – served her proudly.

The passage of the 2018 Farm Bill has once again reignited the dialogue on Federal-Territorial matters. While we call ourselves *proud* Americans, at the end of the day, America has shown us that the millions of dollars funneled by lobbyists to Congress, is more important than the rights of the People of Guam, and even democracy as a whole. Never once, was a public hearing held on this rider provision, never once, was the input of the People of Guam solicited or even considered.

Cockfighting is a centuries old tradition on Guam. We are attaching to this letter a presentation outlining the history of cockfighting on Guam. Congress failed to fulfil their obligation to the People of Guam as the Ninth Circuit stated that, "analysis... must be undertaken with an eye toward preserving Congress' ability to accommodate the unique social and cultural conditions and values of the particular territory." Now that the 2018

Farm Bill is now law, we are shocked that practicing our culture carries a potentially longer jail sentence than other heinous crimes with direct harm to our community. The courts may disregard "a particular application of a law in a particular territory (should it be) would be "impractical or anomalous.""<sup>2</sup> While we are grateful for the purpose of this rule which is to "allow territorial governments to adopt measures that are necessary to protect indigenous peoples and cultures"<sup>3</sup>, an individual's right to liberty and freedom should not be jeopardized, and neither should one be a felon for practicing a centuries-old cultural tradition.

With faith in the democratic process, our continued patriotism to a great nation, we turn to you as the representative of the United States Government to Guam with hopes that democracy still lives.

Respectfully,

The undersigned residents of the Island of Guam

**CC: The Honorable Michael F.Q. San Nicolas**  
United States House of Representatives  
1632 Longworth HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Attached: Cockfighting Culture & Colonialism  
Resolution 14-35

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