

FSM Information Services

Press Release

U.S.-Funded Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program Extended until September 2021

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—On March 23rd, 2021, His Excellency David W. Panuelo, President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and the Honorable Eugene Amor, Secretary of the Department of Finance & Administration, announced that the U.S.-funded Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) Program will be extended until September 2021. The Office of PUA under the Department of Finance & Administration received the official notice for extension of the PUA program from the U.S. Department of Labor on March 15th, 2021.

The President of the United States signed into law the American Rescue Act of 2021 (ARPA) on March 11th, 2021, extending the PUA program for the second time. The ARPA extends the PUA and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) programs from March 14th, 2021 to September 6th, 2021, an additional 29 weeks for an overall total of 79 weeks. Qualified individuals will continue to receive their weekly benefit of \$166 plus the FPUC of \$300 per week.

The PUA program is for individuals whose employment or self-employment was interrupted as a direct result of the COVID-19 Declaration of Public Health Emergency. For the FSM, which remains COVID-19 free, eligible individuals need to be directly impacted by the border closure, or other emergency measures, mandated in the National or State Government Emergency Declarations. It does not cover individuals who are unemployed for reasons not specified in the public health declarations, such as voluntary reduction of work hours, reduction of work hours in response to economic hardship, or working from home but continuing to receive regular income levels.

The first PUA extension occurred on December 27th, 2020 when the President of the United States signed into law the Continued Assistance Act (CAA). The enactment of the CAA extended the PUA program for an additional 11 weeks and reauthorized, but modified, the FPUC supplement to \$300 per week from December 27, 2020 to the week ending on or before March 14th, 2021.

The Office of PUA in the FSM continues to require individuals to submit proof of identification and documentation for employment or self-employment. Individuals are also required to submit Weekly Payment Requests on a bi-weekly basis. Failure to provide required documentation, and/or untimely filing, may disqualify an individual for the program.

It is a violation of both U.S. and FSM law to collect the PUA benefit illegally. If you suspect someone is collecting the PUA benefit illegally, contact the Office of PUA fraud hotline at +691-320-1103 or email opua@gov.fm.

The FSM National Government wishes to thank the U.S. Government for including the FSM in this program, and the U.S. Department of Labor for its continued technical guidance in the administration of PUA and FPUC benefits.