

The Virgin Islands Consortium

USVI Students To Travel To Washington As Part Of \$1 Million 'Close Up Insular Areas' Program

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U.S. Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary of Insular and International Affairs, Doug Domenech, has announced the authorization of a payment of \$1 million to fund the FY 2019 Close Up Insular Areas Program.

This year's program will bring approximately 180 high school-aged students to Washington, D.C. from the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands—as well as the freely associated states of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau—for civic education programs alongside their peers from the 50 states. Funding will also support an additional 320 students and teachers participating in

summits in the island areas.

"I am pleased to support this important program that has provided opportunities to many youth from the U.S. insular areas to visit Washington, D.C. and gain firsthand exposure to democratic institutions at the federal level," Mr. Domenech said. "I am also pleased to note that U.S. Representative Michael San Nicolas of Guam is an alumni of this program."

In explaining the program, last year, Mr. Domenech said, "The goal of this program is to highlight models of American democratic institutions and to foster in youth the interest, knowledge, and skills needed to effectively participate in a democracy. Bringing the students from the islands allows them to have critical exchange and sharing experiences with students from the States."

This year's funding of \$1 million is up \$100,000 from last year's \$900,000 appropriation.

The Close Up Insular Areas Program was first funded by the U.S. Congress in 1987 when House and Senate Appropriations Committee leadership decided to support students from the then-recently dissolved Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The program was expanded to include American Samoa and later the U.S. Virgin Islands. For the past 30 years, the Close Up Insular Areas Program has brought nearly 10,000 students and educators from the U.S. territories and the freely associated states to Washington, D.C.