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Department of Interior Assistant Secretary Carmen G. Cantor Visits American Samoa

"American Samoa is grateful for the opportunity to receive Assistant Secretary Cantor. We appreciate the time she has taken to meet with the leaders of our government, leaders of our community, the private sectors, our healthcare provider, and her engagement in our social cultural festivities. On behalf of Lieutenant Governor Talauega V. Ale and the people of American Samoa, we wish Honorable Carmen G. Cantor all the best on her tenure as Assistant Secretary of Insular and International Affairs."

Pictured above from left to right: CEO Chuck Leota (ASTCA), Lydia Amisone (Deputy Chief of Staff), Amaamalele Tofaeono (Director, Governor's Resilience Office), William Sili (Acting Director, ASEPA), Faleosina Voight (Director, DPW), Petti Matila (Director, DOC), Loa Tuimavave T. Laupola (Chief of Staff), Honorable Lemanu P. S. Mauga (Governor), Honorable Carmen G. Cantor (DOI Assistant Secretary-IIA), Lisa Tuatoo (Director, ODAPM), Basil Ottley (OIA Policy Director), Lydia Faleafine-Nomura (OIA Field Representative-AS), Chris King (Director, DPA), Wallen Young (CEO, ASPA).

The Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs(IIA) Carmen G. Cantor completed her first official visit to American Samoa. She arrived in the territory on August 25, 2022, and departed on Monday, August 29, 2022. Accompanying Assistant Secretary Cantor is Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) Policy Director Basil Ottley and OIA American Samoa Field Representative Lydia Faleafine Nomura.

On Friday, August 26, Assistant Secretary Cantor met with Governor Lemanu and the American Samoa Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Working Group, which consists of selected members

of the Cabinet. Issues that were discussed included the impacts of the July 2022 King Tides and the seismic activities in Manu'a, the challenges of Climate Change and Healthcare, homeporting US Coast Guard cutters in the territory, and BIL priorities in American Samoa.

During this meeting, the Assistant Secretary announced that American Samoa will be receiving an additional $389,025 in grant funding provided through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for the Wetland and Mangrove Restoration in Leone Village and Agroforestry Plant Giveaway. This restoration area includes acreage impacted during the 2009 Tsunami. The project is in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, First Lady's School Garden Initiative, Office of Samoan Affairs, the Department of Education, and village councils.

During her visit, Assistant Secretary Cantor attended a luncheon hosted by the leaders of the Legislature: Senate President Tuaolo M. Fruean, Speaker Savali Talavou Ale, together with Congresswoman Uifaatali Amata Radewagen, and members of the Senate and House of Representatives. She also met with Chief Justice Michael Kruse and Associate Justices of the High Court. Other important visits included the American Samoa LBJ Medical Center, StarKist Samoa cannery, the National Park of American Samoa Visitors Center, and Mosooi Cultural Festivities at the Suigaula o le Atuvasa Park in Utulei.

On Sunday, August 28, Assistant Secretary Cantor attended a Samoan Church Service at the Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa (CCCAS) in Fagamalo, and a traditional Sunday potluck followed thereafter.

Assistant Secretary Cantor's final appearance was at the Opening Ceremony of the 6th Constitutional Convention on August 29, where she delivered her special remarks, "I wanted to set foot on your island to better understand the sacred responsibility entrusted to the Department of Interior for implementing the Federal relationship with you, our fellow Americans… It is truly a privilege to appear before this Constitutional Convention as you actively exercise your right to local self government under the [US] Constitution," remarked Assistant Secretary Cantor.

"American Samoa is grateful for the opportunity to have welcomed Assistant Secretary Cantor. We appreciate the time she has taken to meet with the leaders of our government, leaders of our community, the private sectors, our healthcare provider, and her engagement in our social cultural festivities with our elderly and youth communities. On behalf of Lieutenant Governor Talauega V. Ale and the people of American Samoa, we wish Honorable Carmen G. Cantor all the best on her tenure as Assistant Secretary of Insular and International Affairs," stated Governor Lemanu.

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