



September 2017

## From the governor: Delivering on promises for the future

**M**ention state government, and cynics see only bureaucracy. But Gov. David Ige sees the future. He has challenged state departments to modernize, innovate and make government work better for all of us. That includes tackling tough issues with aggressive goals to show results, replacing antiquated systems and saving taxpayer dollars. The goal? Measurable, visible progress to improve people's lives. This issue of Capitol Connection focuses on some of the progress we're seeing and the state workers who are making change happen.

**Q. When you became governor, you said you wanted to "restore the public's trust in government." Why is this so important to you?**

**A.** People in the community were saying they were concerned about the value they were getting for their taxpayer dollars. When I first took office, I talked to some of the state departments and could see we had good people working in not-so-good systems. They had become risk-averse because it was safer to not try anything new. I thought if we're going to expect them to do more, we needed to modernize systems so workers could do their jobs better and feel supported. We're changing our paper-based systems for more transparency and efficiency and to provide better service to the public. And we're attracting more young people to public service who are bringing new skills and fresh ideas.



**THE BIG PICTURE:** Gov. Ige joined Hawaii Business editor Steve Petranik and past governors George Ariyoshi, John Waihee and Ben Cayetano at Aug. 9 'Visions' event.

**Q. What kinds of progress are you seeing to improve accountability?**

**A.** We're putting more information online for the public to see and to help state workers move complex projects forward. The online systems can range from the state Department of Transportation's map on the **status of road projects** to the Department of Health's **statewide restaurant inspections** site. Our Office of Enterprise Services has already reduced paper use by about 120,000 sheets per month. And in areas like **workers' compensation**, we're modernizing the totally paper-based system. This has reduced wait time for hearings and helped people feel the system is working better and more efficiently. (For details, see story on Page 3.)

**Q. What other steps is your administration taking to make information more available and transparent?**

**A.** In addition to asking the state departments to increase community involvement, I have directed them to increase access to public information for greater accountability. Every state department is being asked to post a point of contact on websites for public records requests, in accordance with the Uniform Information Practices Act. We need to find the balance to comply with requests, handle costs and provide consistency. I've also begun **Facebook Live segments** for the public to ask other guests and me questions.

**Q. How does this progress fit with the "Visions for Hawai'i" project published in Hawaii Business magazine?**

**A.** It's all part of the big picture — of how we can make government work better for all of us. Their vision aligns with many of the priorities the Ige administration is already pursuing for education, jobs, housing and sustainability. I think it's terrific to hear from the next generation. For the vision to have value, the key will be broad community engagement. It's about investing in our people and changing the dynamics of our economy. I truly believe Hawai'i can lead the world in solving some of our planet's most challenging issues. (To see the "Visions" draft, go to [www.hawaiibusiness.com/100-year-visions-for-hawaii](http://www.hawaiibusiness.com/100-year-visions-for-hawaii))

# 'When we work together, we can do great things'

## Progress on homelessness: First statewide decrease in 8 years

No issue has galvanized the community more than homelessness — with the governor's homelessness coordinator **Scott Morishige** and his team leading the charge. For the first time in eight years, the latest Point in Time count of Hawai'i's homeless population showed a **9 percent overall decrease** compared to the same time last year, with Hawai'i, Kaua'i and Maui counties showing some of the largest declines.

In Kaka'ako the state's Family Assessment Center (FAC) is marking its one-year anniversary of offering support services and housing placement in 90 days or less for homeless families. To date, **31 families totaling 127 people** have found housing — and new lives. One example is **the Koli family** (right, center) pictured with FAC staff on the day they moved into permanent housing. Mom Chanda has a full-time job and her daughters, Daimyn and Ofa, are doing well in school. As FAC director Adrian Contreras said, "I'm so proud of what we're able to do here. Our families are learning how to thrive, not just survive."



The Koli family (center) surrounded by FAC staff.

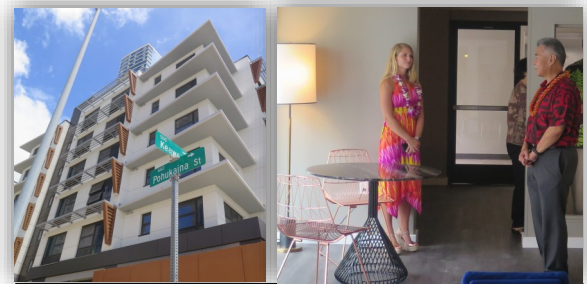


Union head Reggie Castanares, Gov. Ige and Duane Kurisu.

Through **public-private partnerships**, such as businessman Duane Kurisu's **Kahauiki Village**, the plan is to create a plantation-style community for 600 homeless adults and children on state land near Keehi Lagoon. The governor called it "an example of what we can do as a community" to tackle the challenge of homelessness. The Hawaii National Guard helped lay the housing foundation, and the Institute of Human Services will manage the project. Rent, including utilities, will cost \$900 a month for two-bedroom units and \$725 for one-bedroom units. The plan is to have the first 30 families move in by Christmas.

## More housing for middle-income families

To meet the **governor's goal of 10,000 new housing units statewide by 2020**, the state's housing agencies are working with the counties and home builders to streamline processes and improve financing tools. The focus is building more affordable units for working families. This includes **tripling the supply of affordable housing in Kaka'ako** and opening new projects such as the **Keauhou Lane** and **ArtSpace Lofts** rental units as well as projects in other parts of O'ahu and the neighbor islands. Keauhou Lane is a 209-unit Kaka'ako midrise where rents must remain moderate for 30 years.



Gov. Ige at Keauhou Lane, a new complex for middle-income residents.

The governor also praised a **Department of Hawaiian Home Lands'** affordable housing pilot project at **Kapolei Ho'olimalima** that helped 69 families move from renters to homeowners. DHHL partnered with Mark Development, Inc. to create the program using federal low-income housing tax credits.

## Millions of taxpayer dollars saved through strong management

Since taking office, Governor Ige has focused on boosting the State's General Obligation (GO) bond credit ratings to **save taxpayer dollars**. The governor's strong management of the state budget resulted in both Moody's and Standard & Poor's raising the state's credit rating to Aa1 and AA+, respectively, in 2016 which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest rating possible. These strong ratings enabled the state to refinance a portion of its GO bonds, resulting in **savings of \$141.9 million**. Also, the Highways and Harbors divisions, the University of Hawai'i and the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands reported **debt service savings totaling \$78.2 million**. Higher credit ratings result in lower borrowing costs for state projects such as new schools and affordable housing programs.

## Keeping Hawai'i safe on many fronts



Whether it's handling a hurricane, North Korea's threats, rat lungworm disease or cybersecurity, the Ige administration is focusing on **preparedness and prevention**. Although an attack from North Korea is considered unlikely, the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency has issued guidelines at [dod.hawaii.gov/hiema/](http://dod.hawaii.gov/hiema/). After a warning siren, people are advised to **"get inside, stay inside and stay tuned"** for more instructions. **To prevent the spread of rat lungworm disease**, the state has launched an initiative with \$1 million in funds from the state Legislature to increase public education and improve control and prevention. A joint task force with experts from the medical, scientific, environmental and public health communities will address the issue statewide.

Another collaborative effort involves the **new Opioid Abuse Prevention Initiative** launched by Governor Ige. In Hawai'i, one-fourth of accidental deaths are caused by drug overdose, and most of those cases involve opioids, says the state Department of Health (DOH). Also, Hawai'i has joined a multi-state cybersecurity compact to **enhance cybersecurity and develop the cyber workforce**.

# State MVPs move governor's priorities forward

The nominations come from every state department — outstanding employees working to streamline the system, deliver better service and make progress on the governor's future-focused goals. Here are some of the folks recognized by their colleagues for their dedication and determination to make life better for all of us.

## DLIR's Three Amigos: Streamlined workers' comp

They've been dubbed "The Three Amigos" by their co-workers at the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations — three millennials hired as office assistants to help digitize the mountains of paperwork from some 20,000 claims a year in the disability compensation division.

Jodie Nakamura, Ryan Mercado and Liam Tobin have gone above and beyond their humble job titles to modernize and cut in half the wait time for an injured worker to get a hearing date. What used to take anywhere from six months to a year now can be scheduled in a month. They've also helped train other employees in their division in computer-based skills. For these and other contributions, they were named DLIR's "Outstanding Team of the Year."

"It's been a team effort of the whole division with lots of cooperation from everyone," said Nakamura. She also was quick to credit division administrator JoAnn Vidinhar for the push to improve the process and serve the public better. Tobin said the rewards come from being able to help people who are struggling because they can't work anymore. "Their whole life depends on what happens with workers' compensation. They depend on us to be as timely and efficient as possible," he explained.

The three agree the best part of their job is knowing they're reaching people who need a decision as quickly as possible for their claim. Nakamura, a UH-Mānoa graduate and former preschool teacher, added, "Sometimes people say, 'The state takes a long time to do things,' but we tell them we're trying our best to improve the system."

Mercado, whose computer-based training was part of his degree from UH-Mānoa's Academy of Creative Media, said they're working on an "optimization project" with a \$3.2 million appropriation from the state Legislature to digitize what up to now has been volumes of paper-based records. "It's part of modernizing state government and testing out new ways of doing things," he said.

Their supervisor, James Fukumoto, added, "With their computer skills, our 'Three Amigos' have taught many of us so much in such a short time. The governor and the whole state should be proud of their accomplishments. We got lucky when we hired these three. The private sector's loss is the state of Hawai'i's gain."



DLIR's Three Amigos: Jodie, Ryan and Liam.

## DOH transparency equals food safety

It's not often a state agency completely changes the way it does things. Yet that's what has happened, thanks to manager Peter Oshiro and his team of inspectors in the Department of Health's (DOH) sanitation branch. Now customers can check for color-coded placards at Hawai'i's 10,500 restaurants, food trucks, grocery stores, schools and other facilities.

"The system has worked well because we enforce through education," said Oshiro, who was DOH's nominee for outstanding manager of the year. A green "pass" placard means no more than one major food safety violation was found and corrected on site.

A yellow "conditional pass" means two or more major food safety violations were found, or a single violation couldn't be corrected at the time of the inspection. A red or "closed" placard means there's an imminent health hazard that results in a restaurant's permit being suspended or the restaurant was unable to correct the violations within the time frame allowed.

"It's a tribute to my staff that we were able to make this shift to a completely new system," said Oshiro, whose inspectors show up unannounced to check for risk factors such as poor worker hygiene, food temperature controls, rodent infestations or contaminated equipment. He said Hawai'i's food industry must also be commended for its commitment to food safety. "They realized the increased transparency would improve public confidence in the safety of the food being sold which, in turn, would increase their bottom line. This new paradigm shift has been a win-win-win for the industry, public awareness and public health."

DOH's latest innovation is an online portal at [hi.healthinspections.us/hawaii/](https://hi.healthinspections.us/hawaii/) launched in 2016 where the public can read inspection reports for Hawai'i restaurants. Currently, the site covers only O'ahu establishments, but Oshiro said the goal is to include neighbor island restaurants by the end of this year. "Transparency through the placards and the public website is there for the whole world to see. That has a powerful effect in influencing industry behavior," he maintained. (For more MVPs, see next page)



DOH director Ginny Pressler, Peter Oshiro and Gov. Ige.

# More MVPs: A Sustainable Hawai'i dream team

Local girl **Leah Laramée** said her career goal used to be to work in global conservation for the United Nations. But when she came home from college, she recalls, "I saw there was valuable work to be done right here in Hawai'i."

She was a key member of the **Department of Land and Natural Resources' "Outstanding Team of the Year,"** nominated for their coordination of last year's landmark IUCN World Conservation Congress in Hawai'i. The event brought global and local environmental groups together for a record-breaking series of events that drew 10,000 participants from 192 countries. Also, through careful budget oversight, DLNR reported **nearly \$3 million was saved** from funds appropriated and returned to the state's general fund.



DLNR director Suzanne Case congratulates her team, including Leah Laramée (third from right).

For Laramée, 34, the best part was seeing thousands of students and local residents flocking to the Hawai'i Convention Center for the exhibits, forums and activities. "At DLNR, I work every day with people who love what they do and are so passionate about their jobs," said Laramée. "We're grateful to the governor and the state Legislature for their support of our efforts."

Laramée, who is also the 2017 Alumnus of the Year from Kupu, a leading youth conservation organization, said DLNR is moving forward on the **governor's Sustainable Hawai'i initiative**, to protect the islands from invasive species and the threats of climate change. "We in Hawai'i should be proud that we're among the leaders on these environmental issues," she said.

## Kalihi 21st Century: A community's vision for transformation

It's rare that a whole community has the chance to weigh in at the start of a complex planning process. But that was the governor's goal for the **Kalihi 21<sup>st</sup> Century Vision Team**. The result? A report filled with their hopes for Kalihi, combining its proud working-class heritage and values with economic growth for jobs and housing. The vision depends, at least partly, on whether the O'ahu Community Correctional Center will be relocated, as well as proposed rail transit stations.

State planning director Leo Asuncion said of the Vision Team, "The governor wanted to get more community members involved in the vision at the outset. Residential development takes time. That's why we need to start talking now."

For questions, email [dbedt.op.spbranch@hawaii.gov](mailto:dbedt.op.spbranch@hawaii.gov). The report is available at [planning.hawaii.gov/spb/kalihi-21st-century-transformation-initiative/](http://planning.hawaii.gov/spb/kalihi-21st-century-transformation-initiative/)

## New road projects map online

If you're wondering about a current or future road project near you, the answer may be as close as your nearest computer. The state Department of Transportation (HDOT) has launched a **new interactive online map** that shows more than 170 projects under way or planned.

By clicking on a particular location statewide, the public can see the schedule, scope and estimated cost for state highway projects, including those set to begin in the next two years. It also provides an email address for the designated contact for the project.

The Highways Project Status Map can be found at [hi-dot.hawaii.gov](http://hi-dot.hawaii.gov) by clicking on "Highways" on the home page, then going to "Major Projects" and selecting "Project Map." Questions can be sent to [DOTPAO@hawaii.gov](mailto:DOTPAO@hawaii.gov).

## Kaua'i's national tropical garden



Governor Ige and first lady Dawn Amano-Ige admire the 'Jurassic Park tree' with Chipper Wichman, CEO of the National Tropical Botanical Garden (NTBG) on Kaua'i. Gov. Ige praised the work of NTBG in conservation, education and research of the world's tropical plants as well as Wichman's leadership in bringing the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress to the islands.

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