



From the governor: Protecting Hawai‘i, today and tomorrow

From dealing with volcanic eruptions and devastating floods to pushing ahead on the state’s top priorities — the past few weeks have tested the resilience and determination of Hawai‘i’s citizens and the Ige administration. This edition highlights the **governor’s focused approach** to handling big issues and managing the threats of recent natural disasters.

Q. What do you want people to know about the recent natural disasters we’ve seen on Hawai‘i island, Kaua‘i and O‘ahu?

A. The state, county and federal government are committed to **keeping the community safe and helping people rebuild their lives**. Through emergency proclamations, we’ve moved quickly to secure state and federal aid for volcano and flood damage. It’s been so inspiring to see Hawai‘i’s people come together — from county personnel, Civil Defense and the National Guard to the Red Cross, Salvation Army and community volunteers — to help those in need. At the same time, we want people to know that many other parts of the islands are still welcoming visitors with their aloha spirit.

Q. What has made the disaster response to the Kīlauea eruption so challenging?

A. When I arrived at Leilani Estates in Puna, my first impression was this was a **very different kind of eruption**. Fissures were opening on roads in the middle of communities, and there was a lot less warning for residents. We don’t know if the eruption is going to last a few weeks or months, so that’s the challenge and the dilemma. We’re ready to execute plans, should roadways in Puna be lost to lava and air and sea evacuation become necessary. For many of the Puna folks, everything they own is on that property, and they don’t have many other options.

Q. Why did you feel it was important to form a special response team to deal with risks to Puna Geothermal Venture (PGV)?

A. I thought it was **imperative to take decisive action** because residents were clearly concerned about the risks posed by the geothermal facility. The reality is there are active lava tubes under the plant and throughout the East Rift Zone. Currently, the facility is shut down, and we have taken steps to “quench” the wells to prevent a blowout of the wellheads. I wanted to be certain we had a quality team in place — led by Mayor Harry Kim, Tom Travis of the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency, and Talmadge Magno of Civil Defense — to evaluate the risks and work with PGV to determine **the safest and most appropriate course of action**.

Q. What is most significant to you about the 2018 legislative session?

A. The fundamental point to remember is that the **Ige administration’s priorities have prevailed and there’s broad support for these programs**. We have focused on strategies that have worked to increase affordable housing, reduce homelessness, expand education, improve the economy and protect the environment. All received funding support. Homelessness has declined two years in a row and the \$200 million appropriated for affordable rental housing is catching up on requests we made earlier. I’m happy we received more funding for Early College, Hawai‘i’s Promise and watershed protection. We’ve been focused these past three years on serving the **greatest, most pressing needs of the community**, and I do believe our values and priorities reflect that.



(top) Kaula‘i staffer Carrice Gardner, Gov. Ige, state highways deputy Ed Sniffen and engineer Larry Dill check mudslide damage. The governor views cracks on a Puna district road with deputy director of Public Works Merrick Nishimoto.

Governor's state priorities win 2018 legislative support

Affordable housing and homelessness. Education, the economy and the environment. All of Governor Ige's top priorities for budget funding received support in the 2018 legislative session. **"We have alignment on 90 percent of our priorities,"** said Governor Ige. He added that careful financial management by his administration, combined with the robust economy, made the appropriations possible.

At a recent news conference, the governor said the \$200 million to the Rental Housing Revolving Fund for financing affordable rental development was especially needed. "We've been pushing for investments into that fund for the last four years so we're glad the legislature is finally catching up," he said. "The legislature might try to repackage it to look a little different, but it's essentially the program we've been doing now for four years to make progress in affordable housing." Among the governor's initiatives funded for FY 19 are:

- **Early College High School program** - \$1.5M to expand the program in high schools statewide..
- **Hawai'i Promise** - \$700,000 to help UH community college students cover the gap between financial aid and direct college costs.
- **Affordable Housing** – Dwelling Unit Revolving Fund - \$10M; Rental Housing Revolving Fund -\$200M; \$4.5M for **Mayor Wright Homes infrastructure Improvements**—Final EIS approved by governor.
- **Homelessness** - \$6.8M for Housing First, Rapid Re-Housing and other initiatives; \$30M for 'ohana zones.
- **Watershed protection** - \$6.5M in capital improvement funds for protective fencing and initiatives statewide.



PROGRESS: (top) Ainahau Vista, a senior affordable rental, opens in Waikiki. Some of Waipahu High's Early College Olympians with Governor Ige.

Homelessness survey shows coordinated efforts paying off

The numbers are encouraging, the tents are fewer, and yes, there's still plenty of work to be done. Those closest to the challenge know that's the human reality of homelessness. **Are we seeing progress?** Governor Ige and state homelessness coordinator Scott Morishige say news from the latest Point-in-Time count shows **statewide efforts launched three years ago are paying off.** (For a closer look at homelessness, go to <http://bit.ly/2GL6EDC>)

For the second year in a row, Hawai'i's homeless count has decreased statewide, and homelessness on O'ahu decreased for the first time since 2009, according to the Point-in-Time count survey conducted by Bridging the Gap and Partners in Care, a homelessness coalition. The statewide decline featured overall decreases on Kaua'i (28.9 percent), O'ahu (9.4 percent), Hawai'i (8.8 percent), and Maui (2.6 percent). Among the key findings:

- An almost 10 percent decrease in homeless individuals statewide — from 7,220 persons in 2017 to 6,530 in 2018.
- A 10.6 percent decrease in homeless families.
- A 12.5 percent decrease in the number of homeless children in families.
- A 4.8 percent decrease in chronic homeless individuals and families.
- A 13.5 percent decrease in homeless veterans statewide.

"This validates that our **Housing First approach** for reducing homelessness is working," said Governor Ige. "We prioritized fixing the system by including housing placement in service contracts and gave agencies the tools to do their jobs, like enforcement on public lands." The governor praised the coordinated efforts of Partners in Care and Bridging the Gap coalitions and state and county agencies who provide services to those in need.



BRIDGING THE GAP & PARTNERS IN CARE

SECOND CONSECUTIVE DECREASE IN STATEWIDE HOMELESS COUNT

9.6% DECREASE STATEWIDE

O'ahu: ↓ 9.4%

Kaua'i: ↓ 28.9%

Hawai'i County: ↓ 8.8%

Maui County: ↓ 2.6%

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GOOD NEWS: (top) State homelessness coordinator Scott Morishige at the Point-in-Time news conference. Surveys show homelessness progress for two years in a row.

Morishige said over the past three years, Governor Ige has directed resources to "programs we know work." The efforts started with emergency proclamations to fast-track increasing housing units across the state, accelerate partnerships like Duane Kurisu's Kahauiki Village, establish the Family Assessment Center in Kaka'ako and improve enforcement in public spaces while connecting homeless individuals to services. "When it comes to homelessness, funding alone is not enough," said Morishige. You have to take a comprehensive approach and fix things in the system that aren't working. **That's how you create long-lasting change."**

Governor moves decisively on disaster response



ERUPTION ALERT: (from left) Big Island Mayor Harry Kim and Gov. Ige. Hawai'i National Guard and police officers discuss emergency strategies. Lava fountains as high as 230 feet erupted from fissures in Leilani Estates subdivision.

First it was devastating floods on Kaua'i and O'ahu. Then the 6.9 earthquake and Kīlauea eruption on Hawai'i island, with red-hot lava and toxic fumes threatening residents in Lower Puna. Governor Ige has been on the ground to work with county officials, reassure communities, and move quickly on disaster declarations and recovery efforts.

A **Presidential Disaster Declaration for Hawai'i island** was approved just one day after the governor submitted the request. That means federal assistance will be available to repair public roads, parks and schools damaged by the eruption and earthquakes. The governor said he also wanted the state to be ready in case a large-scale evacuation of Puna residents is needed.

"These lava fissures are opening on key arteries and highways," said the governor when he was at Leilani Estates on Hawai'i Island. "If we lost those, the community would be isolated, just as in Wainiha and Hā'ena (on Kaua'i) when Kūhiō Highway and other roads became impassable. We would have to find other ways to evacuate residents. A mass evacuation of the lower Puna District would be beyond current county and state capabilities and would quickly overwhelm our collective resources." Since the start of the eruption May 3, the lava has destroyed more than 100 structures, covered hundreds of acres of land, and left many families wondering what their future holds.

The president also approved a **Major Disaster Declaration** for emergency repair of damaged public facilities in **Kaua'i County and the City and County of Honolulu**. In addition, Governor Ige signed a flood recovery bill that sets aside \$100 million to help with repairs to roads and bridges on Kaua'i and \$25 million on O'ahu. Emergency federal and state loans are also available for affected farmers. The request for individual federal assistance to homeowners is pending, based on a review of damages.

To protect public safety on the Big Island, the governor also took action on a "more comprehensive approach" to mitigate risks posed by two concerns at **Puna Geothermal Venture (PGV)**: quick removal off-site of 60,000 gallons of pentane, a flammable liquid used in the production of geothermal power, and "quenching" the geothermal wells themselves to prevent a blow-out.

"I asked Mayor Harry Kim and Tom Travis of HI-EMA to lead a team to work with PGV to evaluate the risks and reach out to national experts," explained the governor. He said he took the action because at a community meeting he attended "clearly that was the biggest concern expressed by residents. We wanted to be certain we had the authority to act decisively and be proactive."

In addition to all this, scientists at the **Hawaiian Volcano Observatory** have issued warnings about steam-powered blasts from Kīlauea's summit, threatening other nearby areas with huge ash plumes and falling rocks. Governor Ige said he understands the anxiety people are feeling and wanted to offer some reassurance. "I want residents to know that the state, county and federal government are committed to keeping our community safe, first and foremost," said the governor. "We're working to mitigate the risks as best we can and help people rebuild their lives as quickly as possible."



(from top) Waimānalo farmer Scott Wilson describes flood damage to U.S. Sen. Mazie Hirono and the governor. Laura Richards, general manager of the Hanalei Colony Resort, with Gov. Ige, Maj.Gen. Joe Logan of the Hawai'i National Guard and Elton Ushio of Kaua'i Emergency Management. Sergio Mamone (center) and his 'ohana, who helped feed residents displaced by the Kīlauea eruption.

A moving 'Celebration of Life' for Senator Daniel Akaka

Music soared through the Capitol rotunda May 18 as hundreds of civic leaders and ordinary citizens paid tribute to the beloved late U.S. Senator Daniel Akaka. The ceremonies began with a morning processional at the state Capitol and continued into the evening with a prayer service and the following day with a celebration of life at Kawaihae Church.

Speaker after speaker at the services described the former senator as a man of humility and integrity, who devoted his life to serving his state and the nation. "He was definitely someone who lived his values and embodied aloha," said Governor Ige in an earlier interview. "In spite of how partisan Congress became during his last term in office and while he was trying to get the Akaka bill passed, I never heard him disparage anyone. He had tremendous power in his aloha."

The 10 a.m. Capitol ceremony, even with all its pomp and circumstance, still felt like a family affair with hugs and tears. The senator's widow, Mildred "Millie" Akaka, their son, daughter and grandchildren greeted the stream of visitors who came to pay their respects, while the Royal Hawaiian Band and students from Kamehameha Schools, along with other musicians, performed some of the senator's favorite songs during the 24 hours the senator lay in state in the Capitol rotunda.

At the evening service, Governor Ige said Mrs. Akaka had told him the senator wouldn't have wanted such an elaborate event. "But Auntie Millie, I just want you to know this was probably one of the easiest things I've had to do because everyone — everyone — wanted to do something on behalf of Uncle Danny," the governor said.



(top) The Hawai'i National Guard stood watch as the late Sen. Akaka lay in state in the Capitol rotunda. Governor Ige and the first lady greet Danny Akaka, Jr. and family members.

Outstanding state employees honored for public service



AWARD WINNERS: Governor Ige with (from top) JoAnn Vidinhar and Leonard Hoshijo of DLIR; Catherine Awakuni Colón and Susan Hansen of DCCA; and Russell Suzuki and Deirdre Marie-Iha of the Attorney General's office.

The everyday heroes who provide the services Hawai'i's citizens have come to expect — and who work to make things better for all of us — were honored at the May 23 Governor's Employees of the Year event. "All of the individuals and teams being recognized have selflessly given of themselves to enrich the lives of those they serve," said Governor Ige. "Their accomplishments make our state a special place to live and work."

Among the 54 exceptional state employees, managers and work teams honored were those singled out as "the best of the best." **The top winners for 2018 are:**

- **State Manager of the Year: JoAnn Vidinhar**, disability compensation administrator, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations – Vidinhar was recognized for her fresh, innovative leadership to improve the division's business processes, reduce delays for injured workers to receive compensation and implement a \$3.3 million modernization project.
- **State Employee of the Year: Susan Hansen**, CIAF insurance examiner, Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs – Hansen has devoted countless hours to developing a more accessible system to digitize and manage documents for the Captive Insurance Branch without incurring additional software costs. The long-term benefits will maintain Hawai'i's competitive edge in the captive insurance market.
- **State Team of the Year: 2017 Maui Hospitals Transition Team**, Department of the Attorney General – This team of 10 outstanding attorneys provided the legal support to make possible the largest privatization effort in Hawai'i's history. The transfer of health care services on Maui and Lana'i from Hawai'i Health Systems to Kaiser Permanente involved reviewing more than 500 contracts, consulting with employee unions and producing a comprehensive lease document that will serve the community for decades to come.

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