



# CAPITOL CONNECTION

July 2019

## Working together for the best community solutions

**M**oving forward together — ‘Oni Like Kākou — is more than a convenient catchphrase. It’s Governor Ige’s basic belief for how we can make progress as a community — whether it’s restoring Hā’ena on Kaua’i after devastating floods, finishing a new airport facility on Maui or building more affordable rentals for working families. This issue describes some of those efforts made possible with the help of many hands: state, county and private sector partners, legislators and community leaders.

**Q. What can we learn from the Hā’ena State Park Master Plan on Kaua’i and managing tourism in vulnerable areas?**

**A.** The Hā’ena master plan is the result of the hard work of many people and the first plan that envisioned **reducing** the number of visitors in an area. It’s a new system designed to protect the environment and community interests while supporting the visitor industry. Clearly, too many people in a spot as beautiful as Hā’ena is just not good for the environment and residents and visitors alike. The solutions aren’t easy, but the changes represent a chance to manage tourism more effectively (See Page 3 story).

**Q. What were some important outcomes from your meetings with the Western Governors’ Association and in Washington, D.C.?**

**A.** As the WGA chair, I’ve made biosecurity a priority because the Western governors agree it’s a huge issue — especially when you have rivers crossing several states that become a conduit for invasive pests. Right now, there’s no agency in the federal government that has responsibility for biosecurity. In Washington, I took part in a bi-partisan session with President Trump because the subject was workforce development — an area everyone agrees is important. I’m on a mission to maximize federal support, especially to create more jobs in Hawai’i. It was also a chance to thank the White House for the federal disaster relief (See Page 3 story).



Governor and Mrs. Ige hiked Kaua’i’s Kalalau Trail with DLNR chair Suzanne Case and others from Ha’ena.



Gov. Ige with AG Connors at news conference.

## State issues notice to proceed for TMT project

**C**onstruction is expected to begin this summer on Hawai’i island’s Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) on Mauna Kea following the Hawai’i Supreme Court’s decision in October 2018 to uphold the Conservation District Use Permit approved by the state Board of Land and Natural Resources in 2017. At a June 20 news conference, Governor Ige announced the state has issued a notice to proceed with the project. The appropriate agencies will work with TMT representatives to determine the start date.

The governor, attorney general Clare Connors, DLNR chair Suzanne Case and UH president David Lassner all emphasized the importance of stewardship, safety and security during construction. “We will proceed in a way that respects all people and all perspectives,” Governor Ige said. “We are all stewards of Mauna Kea, and I will continue to work with the University of Hawai’i and all our partners to contribute to the co-existence of culture and science on Mauna Kea.”

Attorney General Connors reiterated the responsibility of the state to protect the rights of all who engage in lawful activity on Mauna Kea, including cultural practitioners, scientists and construction workers who need safe access to the mountain as well as the right to engage in free speech. “Remember that this is part of a much larger conversation about the stewardship of Mauna Kea,” Connors said. “The safety of our community depends on people respecting the law and each other.” UH president Lassner added, “This is an important milestone in what has been a decade-long public process.... (This telescope) will stretch the bounds of discovery, helping us see farther into our universe than ever before, literally back to the beginning of time and our very origins.”

# New Conrac at Kahului Airport open for business

Local residents and visitors to Maui can now take advantage of the newly opened **Consolidated Rent-A-Car (Conrac) facility**, hailed as environmentally friendly and the first of its kind in the state. At the dedication in May, Governor Ige said, “The best part is this is funded with no taxpayer dollars involved. The \$340 million (to build the facility) comes from car rental customers from around the world who visit Maui County.”

The same daily charge of \$4.50 from rental car customers is also paying for the Conrac at the Daniel K. Inouye International Airport in Honolulu, slated for completion in 2021.

The Maui Conrac houses all major rental car companies in one spot and connects passengers with the airport via an electric tram designed to reflect the Valley Isle’s plantation roots. The tram will help relieve congestion by eliminating the need for fossil-fueled shuttle buses transporting customers. The project also features cascading waterfalls and pools that serve as an irrigation reservoir of non-potable water for landscaped areas.

“Kahului is the second busiest airport in the state, and the people of Maui deserve a facility of this caliber,” said HDOT deputy director Ross Higashi. “Our team found a way to add functional beauty to the project without adding to the cost.” The new three-story Conrac includes rental car offices, customer service counters and “ready and return” rental car spaces.



Gov. Ige and Maui leaders at the blessing. Rental car customers will ride the new electric tram with ‘conductors’ at the airport.

## Hawai‘i earns A+ for planned use of VW settlement

More electric vehicle charging stations and electric buses will be part of Hawai‘i’s future, thanks to \$8.1 million in Volkswagen settlement funds to accelerate the Ige administration’s goals for more sustainable energy generation and use. Hawai‘i and Washington were the only two states to earn a perfect A+ score on their electric vehicle infrastructure and mass transit plans, according to the Volkswagen Settlement Scorecard.

“Electric vehicles are far less polluting than gas-powered cars, with half the carbon footprint, as well as fewer emissions of pollutants that contribute to poor air quality and respiratory diseases,” said the VW Settlement State Scorecard report. Hawai‘i was praised for its plan to take full advantage of the opportunity to invest in transportation electrification. Thirty-seven states received a “D” or “F.”

In 2016, Volkswagen admitted to installing illegal emissions control software on more than half a million vehicles in the U.S. and entered into a massive multibillion dollar settlement with federal authorities. The majority of the funds went to compensating owners of offending vehicles, but nearly \$3 billion was allocated to provide each state with funds to promote electric vehicles.

## Hale Kewalo: Bringing more affordable rentals to Kaka‘ako



Hale Kewalo near Ala Moana Center.

Hale Kewalo is the latest project to bring more affordable rental units to urban Honolulu for low-income households. The 128-unit building at 450 Pi‘ikoi, just a short walk from Ala Moana Center, opened in May through a public-private partnership between the state’s Hawai‘i Housing Finance and Development Corp. and developer Stanford Carr.

“We talked about doing Kaka‘ako better, and about bringing affordable rentals into this community because it’s definitely something our community asked for,” Governor Ige said. He added that Hale Kewalo was one of the first affordable housing projects considered by his administration after he took office in 2015.



The Ige housing team, including Sara Lin and Kent Miyasaki, toured Hale Kewalo.

Monthly rent ranges from \$656 to \$1,093 for one-bedroom units, \$787 to \$1,575 for two-bedroom units and \$1,819 for three-bedroom units. The 60 percent median income limit for tenants equates to \$49,020 for a single person, \$55,980 for a couple and \$69,960 for a family of four.



# Dawning of a new day for Hā'ena celebrated

From flood devastation to a model for the entire state — that's how officials described the restoration of Hā'ena at a community blessing and bill signing by Governor Ige last month. The Kaua'i ceremony marked the anticipated reopening of Kūhiō Highway and Hā'ena State Park, the gateway to the famed Kalalau Trail along the Nāpali Coast. It also recognized legislators, community leaders and county and state departments who have worked together to restore the area for local residents and visitors.



COURTESY DLNR

**Gov. Ige signed HB329 (Act 35)** that extends disaster relief

funds so residents in Hā'ena and Wainiha can continue to rebuild their lives. He also praised the community as a model for sustainable tourism and practices. "This is home to the first Community-Based Subsistence Fishing Area in Hawai'i. Congratulations for being able to show what it means to take responsibility for managing our ocean resources."

The Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) Division of State Parks, Kaua'i County and other organizations are implementing a long-planned effort to control the number of visitors to the area. This includes a new reservation system for park entrance, a shuttle system to reduce the number of vehicles traveling into Hā'ena State Park, higher fines for people who park illegally, a new parking lot and stepped-up enforcement. The intent is to reduce daily visitors from an estimated 3,000 people each day to 900. For details on the new system in place, go to <http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/parks/kauai/haena-state-park/>. Hawai'i residents are exempt from the reservation process to enter the park, but they need to provide valid identification to staff. However, parking is limited and available on a first come, first-served basis. Non-residents will need an entry ticket.



Gov. Ige signs HB 329 with community leaders, including Chipper Wichman.

DLNR Chair Suzanne Case talked about the positive community action that came in the wake of the April floods "Our challenge is creating bridges between the old world and our modern world, between kama'aina and our visitors. It's a lot of contradictions to hold, but today is a reconciliation between an event that was so devastating and scary — and a new day. That's why we're here." Ed Sniffen, head of the Department of Transportation Highways Division, recalled past visits where all he saw was damage and debris. "Today was the first time I could look out the window and see the beauty of this community . . . a community that reminds everybody of what real strength is."

## Seeking action on biosecurity, workforce development



Gov. Ige at a press conference with other WGA leaders.

**A**s chair of the Western Governors' Association (WGA), Governor Ige met with leaders from a dozen western states last month in Colorado to discuss major policy initiatives. The WGA approved four resolutions on biosecurity and invasive species management (the governor's signature initiative), national parks, wildlife migration corridors, and federal-state land exchanges and purchases. "It's remarkable to see how big an issue biosecurity is for all the western states," said Governor Ige. "On the mainland, the states are tied together by highways and waterways, which allows for easy transmission of invasive pests. We need to establish who at the federal level has the authority to stop vessels and keep out invasives that can wreak havoc on the environment."

**The WGA resolution on biosecurity** calls for the creation of a Western Invasive Species Council; new mechanisms to enhance regional invasive species research, planning and coordination; and recommendations to Congress and federal agencies on improving invasive species management on federal lands and supporting state-led management efforts.

**Governor Ige then traveled to Washington, D.C. in his role as co-chair of the Council of Governors.** While there, he joined a working lunch with President Donald Trump and used the opportunity to thank the president for the federal disaster relief funding for Hawai'i. The governor reported on what the state has been doing to provide more mentorships and job training in health care, IT and cybersecurity. "The federal government has given us grants to do apprenticeships in non-traditional areas," the governor said. "If we have an employer who is having a hard time filling jobs with qualified candidates, one of our UH community colleges can work with businesses to develop the curriculum and employ the graduates, once they become certified. It's also consistent with creating more job training opportunities for inmates as part of criminal justice reform."

# 'A Universe of Stories' for summer

**I** don't think books or libraries will ever go out of style," said first lady Dawn Amano-Ige. "Reading lets you share in other people's worlds, discover new ideas and explore possibilities. And libraries are places where the community can connect." Mrs. Ige joined Rep. Lynn DeCoite and others on Moloka'i last month to mark the start of the Hawai'i State Public Library System's Summer Reading Program, which runs through July 13, and to lay the groundwork for future projects.

The first lady and state librarian Stacey Aldrich are among the most avid cheerleaders for reading in any form. "We know it's vital for language and brain development, especially in the first five years of a child's life," said Mrs. Ige. One big advantage for Hawai'i residents is that all 51 library branches are connected in one statewide network accessible on any island.



Mrs. Ige on Moloka'i; Stacey Aldrich.

"Being the only statewide system in the nation makes a huge difference," Aldrich said. "No matter where you are, you have access to our entire collection of physical and digital resources." Those resources are just a click away on the library system's newly redesigned website at <https://www.librarieshawaii.org>. The user-friendly site urges you to "read, attend, learn, research and connect" through books and beyond. It can help connect you to resources to learn a foreign language, take an online course, join a book club, and discover library events statewide. The site also offers "hot picks," ebooks, audio books and pre-K to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade interactive books with games for children.

Hawai'i's librarians are constantly looking for ways to create events that excite people about reading. Mrs. Ige said there's still time for students and people of all ages to participate in the summer program, "A Universe of Stories." Besides helping the state reach its goal of 13 million minutes of reading (last year Hawai'i surpassed its goal), the popular annual program features a chance to win a round trip for four to anywhere Alaska Airlines flies. "Last year a 7-year-old won the grand prize and took his family to Disney World," Aldrich recalled. To register, go to [librarieshawaii.beanstack.org](http://librarieshawaii.beanstack.org). Aldrich is also excited about future plans, such as a sound room at the new Nānākuli Library to archive oral histories from kūpuna and more adult literacy programs. "Through new community partnerships, we're developing more programs, such as a maker space on Kaua'i or loaning out 'ukulele provided by the Music for Life Foundation," she explained.

Any advice for busy families trying to squeeze in more reading time? "Start with some family reading time a few minutes a day or on weekends," the first lady suggested. "Reading is a habit that's going to help every family build better opportunities for the future." Aldrich agrees with the author of the book "Palaces for the People," who says public libraries and other shared spaces are vital for keeping democracies strong. "Libraries are places where everyone is welcome. We need to invest in these spaces if we want to stay connected, not divided, as a nation," Aldrich said.

## Honoring King Kamehameha

**I**t's an iconic image: the regal statue of King Kamehameha bedecked with lei on his special day in June. What the public doesn't see is the army of volunteers who craft the dozens of lei for ceremonies across the state, including the 30-foot creations Governor Ige presents in the ceremony fronting Ali'iolani Hale in Honolulu.

Ever since the governor took office in 2015, a corps of 80 to 100 volunteers has gathered every year at Washington Place to do their part. "It's an honor to help Governor and Mrs. Ige participate in the lei draping ceremony," said volunteer Faith Kaneshiro. The Iges also offer a ho'okupu as a tribute to the king who united the islands and played such a critical role in Hawai'i's history.



### A CEREMONY FIT FOR A KING

(clockwise from left) Gov. and Mrs. Ige stand as Kumu Hina Wong-Kalu performs the opening chant.

The statue of King Kamehameha I, draped in dozens of fragrant lei.

A volunteer works on the governor's 30-foot lei, composed of Song of India leaves, bougainvillea and purple crown flowers, said to have been Queen Lili'uokalani's favorite.

Students from the Mālama 'Āina program in Wai'anae helping at Washington Place.

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