



# CAPITOL CONNECTION

August 2019

## From the governor: Local leaders tackle tough issues

**H**ow do a state — and a nation — move forward on the toughest of issues? The answers lie in the laws we enact and the actions we take to resolve differences and address common concerns. This edition of Capitol Connection highlights several legislative bills Governor Ige recently signed into law and looks ahead to how we can protect our community during hurricane season.



**Q. What’s most challenging about the bill review process?**

**A.** As governor, I have **only the three options**: sign the bill into law, veto it or let it become law without my signature. I take public comments and the views of state agencies into account and ask, “Is it the right thing to do for the people of Hawai‘i?” The measures I veto may have some merit but propose something that is in error legally or violates the state constitution or it may just not be good policy. The bills that become law without my signature might involve concerns I have with the process, or I might disagree with parts of the measure, but they’re not so egregious that I would veto the whole bill.

**Q. What bills in particular do you want to highlight, especially as they relate to your priorities?**

**A.** Measures to help us address **affordable housing and homelessness** are continuing priorities for me. The legislature supported us with a \$167 million to keep the momentum going for building more rentals and investing in infrastructure. The housing task force we created in 2015 helped us lay the foundation to leverage private sector support. Now affordable housing developers are coming here because they know we’re serious about building these units. The legislature also provided additional homelessness funds for Housing First and other programs because they know they work.



Gov. Ige with the Women’s Legislative Caucus and Caroline Kennedy.

**Q. What did we learn from last year’s hurricane season and the Kīlauea eruption that can help us handle emergencies this year?**

**A.** We learned how important it is **to coordinate at all levels of government** and make sure everyone is on the same page. We were able to establish stronger ties with our federal partners, who better understand our state’s unique vulnerabilities. They were also impressed with how the state and counties worked together to handle last year’s flooding and the Kīlauea eruption. I think the mayors and myself recognize we need to focus on keeping people safe and not get bogged down in politics. I’m especially proud of the way members of the community stepped forward to help those affected by these disasters. On a national level, streamlining how states receive aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is one of the priorities I’m working on as co-chair of the Council of Governors — to reduce paperwork and provide funds to the states faster (See Page 3 story).

**Q. Sen. Mazie Hirono and former ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy spoke recently about the importance of local leadership and Hawai‘i being an example for the world. Why do you see that as important?**

**A.** Both of them reminded us that **cities and states have to step up when the federal government doesn’t** — whether it involves civil rights, the rights of women or climate change. In the U.S. Climate Alliance, we governors decided to commit to fighting global warming, even though the U.S. withdrew from the Paris climate accord. I think it’s sad that so many of these issues involving basic human or reproductive rights have become part of a political “divide-and-conquer” scenario. Caroline Kennedy reminded us, as her father did in 1963, that true equality will happen first locally. What her father said more than 50 years ago is even more relevant today.

# New laws to move forward on state's key issues

In the past two months, Governor Ige has joined with legislators and advocates to sign into law dozens of bills that affect virtually every segment of the community, including measures that advance the governor's major initiatives in housing and homelessness, sustainability and education. The signing ceremonies represent the culmination of often years of work by stakeholders to improve policies and programs. Here are some highlights from recent bill signings. For a full list of new laws, go to <https://governor.hawaii.gov>, then scroll to "Bills signed or vetoed." (Look for a summary of more bills in the September Capitol Connection.)



Gov. Ige with legislators and affordable housing partners at bill signing.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- **HB1312 (Act 189)** will add \$100 million to the Rental Housing Revolving Fund over the next two years. This is in addition to \$67 million added to the Dwelling Unit Revolving Fund via Act 40 for infrastructure and land acquisitions. "These funds will help us keep the momentum going in building more affordable housing," said the governor. We've completed 6,700 units and we have 7,700 more in the pipeline — 80 percent of them affordable."

## HOMELESSNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

- **HB257 (Act 128)** extends the 'Ohana Zones Pilot, the Emergency Department Assessment Pilot and the Medical Respite Pilot programs. Together, they seek to decrease emergency room visits, provide temporary housing and places for the homeless to recover once they are discharged from the hospital. **SB1124 (Act 129)** encourages the use of coordinated community treatment of those with severe mental illness, and **SB 567 (Act 130)** appropriates \$100,000 to the Department of Health to help families navigate the legal process in seeking help for a family member with an untreated mental illness. **HB330 (Act 180)** appropriates \$150,000 to the Department of Health for youth suicide prevention.

## PUBLIC SAFETY, CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM REFORM

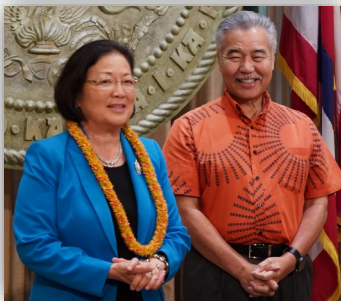
- **HB1552 (Act 179)** establishes the **Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission** to provide independent oversight of the state's correctional system to improve conditions and programs as well as the criminal pretrial system. The new commission and oversight coordinator will work with the director of public safety to prevent overcrowding at facilities, expand rehab services, and investigate complaints. The hope is to reduce the inmate population, reduce spending and reduce repeat offenders.



Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald (center) joins the governor, key legislators and advocates for reform.

## IMPROVING THE ELECTIONS PROCESS

- **HB1248 (Act 136)** requires elections to be conducted by mail, starting with the **2020 primary election**. Hawai'i joins at least 22 other states that allow certain elections to be conducted entirely by mail. There will still be voter service centers open 10 business days prior to election day and on election day. **SB216 (Act 135)** requires a vote recount when the margin of victory is equal to or less than 100 or one-quarter one percent of the votes cast — whichever is greater.



U.S. Sen. Mazie Hirono with Gov. Ige.

## WOMEN'S LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

- Hawai'i has become the first state in the nation to remove a requirement through **SB1039 (Act 176)** that persons must prove they were victims of sex trafficking to have a prostitution conviction expunged from their records and who have avoided additional convictions for three years. **SB1037 (Act 175)** amends the offense of "abuse of a family or household member" to clarify that bodily injury does not have to be visible to establish the offense of strangulation. **HB483 (Act 177)** extends the deadline for the Legislative Reference Bureau to finish a study relating to the Patsy Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act (Title IX).

The Caucus dedicated its bill package to **Sen. Mazie Hirono**, one of the co-founders of the group when she served in the legislature 20 years ago. "Women working together makes a huge difference," she emphasized. "Nationally, there's an all-out assault on women's health and women's right to choose, voting rights, civil rights — all these rights are being challenged. That is why it is so important that a lot of these protections get enacted at the state level. There's a lot of focus on what states can do to protect our democracy. I commend you for your continued advocacy. It's good to know that decades later we're still fighting back."

# HI-EMA urges residents to prepare, stay vigilant

**W**e've all heard the advice about two-week supply kits, family emergency plans and prepping for possible hurricane damage. But how many of us are taking the advice seriously? As the head of Hawai'i's Emergency Management Agency, Tom Travis worries about that as much as the next hurricane or tsunami alert.

**"The foundation on which emergency management is built is the local community,"** he said. "The stronger you can make your community, the better it is for everyone." Travis knows this first-hand — from his years of living in Kapoho on Hawai'i island and from his military and civilian experience as a former national security analyst, including working on the federal government response to Hurricane Katrina.

**Travis came out of retirement in 2018** at the urging of his old friend, Mayor Harry Kim, to help restore public confidence in HI-EMA after the false missile alert. What he didn't anticipate were the 2018 historic floods, the Kīlauea eruption and Hurricane Lane that battered the islands. **"My highest priorities** are to make sure HI-EMA works well for the state and to build public support," he said. "This organization is filled with really competent, motivated people who need to be recognized for what they do every day." **HI-EMA demonstrated that competence last year** as it worked with other federal, state and county agencies to handle the back-to-back natural disasters that stretched over several months. Travis said he and others worked 16- to 18-hour days and lived on Hawai'i island to help residents cope with losing nearly everything they owned. Other HI-EMA staff worked with residents on Kaua'i and in East Honolulu to help with flood recovery.

**At least with hurricanes,** Travis said HI-EMA can track storms five days out. However, his "worst case scenario" would have been if Hurricane Lane had made a direct hit on O'ahu. "It would have disabled most of the state," Travis said. "We're not Puerto Rico because we have a stronger community, infrastructure and a governor ready to take charge. But we're still a chain of islands, 2,500 miles from the nearest port, and only one port on O'ahu." Travis also warned, **"A tsunami could be even more deadly** because we would get very little warning — nine hours at most," he said. "It would be like the tsunami that hit Hilo in 1960 after the earthquake in Chile. Fortunately, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center can evaluate almost immediately the level of threat."

**For someone who could be living a life of leisure** on the mainland, why did Travis decide to take on what is arguably one of the most stressful jobs in the state? "You work hard because you want to do the right thing," he said. "It's actually wonderful to have the opportunity to serve. For my wife and me, **Hawai'i is home.** I've lived here longer than anywhere else in the world. I just adore Hawai'i," he said pausing with a smile. . . "for the people, not the traffic."



HI-EMA administrator Tom Travis in the State Emergency Operations Center.

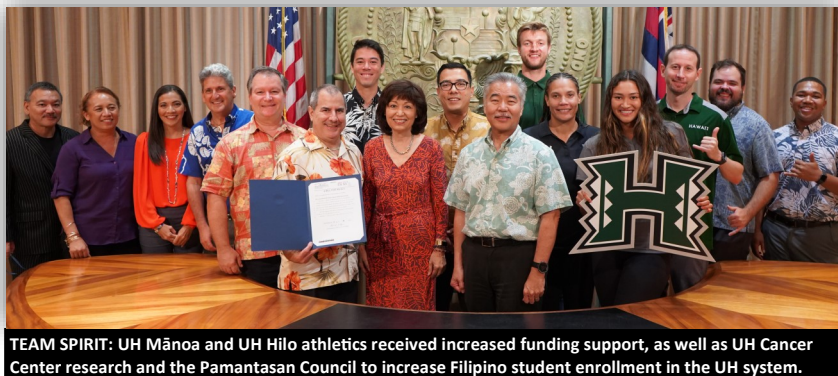
## ARE YOU READY?

- Build an emergency kit—now. Visit [ready.hawaii.gov](http://ready.hawaii.gov) for practical advice.
- Prepare an action plan for whether your family intends to shelter in place or evacuate.
- Stay tuned to local media and/or apps for weather updates.
- Get to know your neighbors and community so you can help each other. Check property for potential flood threats.
- Secure important documents, including insurance policies and agent contact.

## Support for UH programs, new stadium development

### UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I

• The governor also signed **three bills supporting various UH programs: HB 1547 (Act 264)**, appropriating \$4 million for UH Mānoa and UH Hilo student athletes, operations and team travel. **HB654 (Act 265)** funds UH Cancer Center research on the high incidence of liver and bile duct cancer in Hawai'i. **SB1418 (Act 266)** funds two positions for the UH Pamantasan Council ("pamantasan" is a Filipino word for "higher education") to increase Filipino student enrollment in the UH system.



TEAM SPIRIT: UH Mānoa and UH Hilo athletics received increased funding support, as well as UH Cancer Center research and the Pamantasan Council to increase Filipino student enrollment in the UH system.

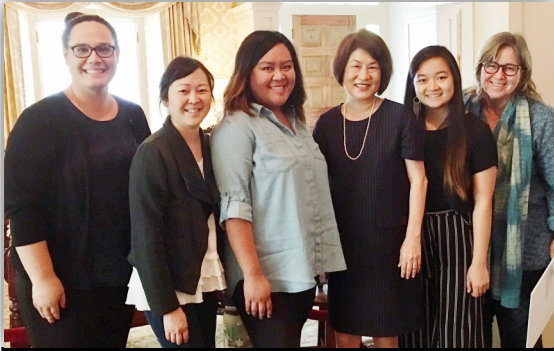
### STADIUM DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

• **HB1586 (Act 268)** establishes a Stadium Development District and appropriates funding for the construction of a new stadium and complementary mixed-use land development that will help generate revenue for the state and create a world-class multi-purpose facility. The Stadium Authority will work with the Hawaii Community Development Authority (HCDA) to facilitate the process. "Recent events such as the Bruno Mars concerts and the upcoming professional football pre-season game featuring the L.A. Rams and Dallas Cowboys make it clear we need to invest in a new facility to serve our state," said Governor Ige.

# Students help history come alive at Washington Place

The rich history and personal stories connected to **Washington Place** — the home of Queen Lili'uokalani, Hawai'i's last reigning monarch, and several governors — will come alive in a new 21<sup>st</sup> century way starting this month. An app that can be downloaded on SmartPhones and iPads will help people interact with history in the palms of their hands.

The new “augmented reality” technology and a website describing “The Washington Place Experience” were developed by UH-West O’ahu’s creative media students in partnership with the Washington Place staff. The new app enables people to scan select photos on a tour and listen to stories and personal memories of the queen and past governors.



UH-West O’ahu’s creative media team with Mrs. Ige and Cynthia Engle (far left) have added ‘augmented reality’ to Washington Place.

“This is such a spectacular home,” said first lady Dawn Amano-Ige. “We want to share its stories with the community. We have our wonderful docents still doing traditional tours, but now we have a special app that people can use to ‘augment’ or enhance their own self-guided tour as they walk through the home.” A new website at <https://ags.hawaii.gov/washingtonplace/news-events/> provides background on Washington Place, new projects and visitor information. On the website, people can reserve a time for the Thursday morning, docent-led tours, or an augmented reality tour by contacting [WashingtonPlaceCurator@gmail.com](mailto:WashingtonPlaceCurator@gmail.com).

Mrs. Ige and Washington Place curator Cynthia Engle have been working with UH-West O’ahu’s students for the past three years to expand public access to the historic home through cutting-edge digital tools that bridge the past while “standing in the now.” The project also builds on Governor Ige’s vision to help students develop tech-savvy skills and creative thinking so they can fill jobs for an innovation economy in Hawai’i.

Refurbishing and opening up the second floor of the historic home to the public has been one of Mrs. Ige’s priorities. With the creation of the governors’ photo gallery in 2017, people can now learn more about past leaders of Hawai’i, their families and milestones in the state’s history. The newly created website also describes the home as the special place where Queen Lili’uokalani spent 55 years of her life and left a legacy of strength, dignity and courage.

As curator, Engle talks with excitement about the prospect of educating more people about the significance of the iconic residence. “How do you bring a house from 1847 into the 21<sup>st</sup> century — especially to reach a younger generation raised on technology?” she asked. “Our partnership with the UH-West O’ahu’s students has been great. As part of the Academy of Creative Media, they brought the skills and the perspective of a new generation. This project is just the beginning.”

## Bhanot earns national honors

Hawai’i’s Department of Human Services (DHS) director Pankaj Bhanot has received national recognition for bringing a multigenerational approach to state services. Bhanot was named the Outstanding Member of the Year by the American Public Human Service Association.



Pankaj Bhanot

Bhanot has risen through the ranks of DHS and has dedicated his 20-year career to making life better for children and their families. He has modernized the department’s eligibility systems and is often asked to talk at national conferences about Hawai’i’s ‘Ohana Nui approach that addresses the comprehensive health and social service needs of whole families.

## DCCA’s LifeSmarts looking for teams

Registration has begun for **Hawai’i LifeSmarts**, a free program that prepares students to become smart, savvy consumers. Students in grades 6-12 compete in five key areas: personal finance, health and safety, the environment, technology and consumer rights and responsibilities.

The junior varsity competition for grades 6-8, which is entirely online, opens Oct. 21 and closes Dec. 6, 2019 at 7 p.m. HST. The varsity program for grades 9-12 starts online, then the top four schools participate in an in-person state competition in Honolulu. The winner then goes on to represent Hawai’i at the National LifeSmarts Championship on the mainland. Last year ‘Iolani School ranked 9<sup>th</sup> among 39 teams nationwide.

DCCA partners with the Hawaii Credit Union League in sponsoring the program. For more details, call (808) 586-2737 or go to [LifeSmartsHawaii.com](http://LifeSmartsHawaii.com). To register, go to [lifesmarts.org](http://lifesmarts.org).

**Contact Us:** Executive Chambers, State Capitol  
Honolulu, Hawai’i 96813  
Phone: (808) 586-0034 Fax: (808) 586-0006  
Hilo Office (808) 974-6262 | Kona Office (808) 323-4542  
Maui Office (808) 243-5798 | Kaua’i Office (808) 274-3100

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