



Excerpts of the governor's 2020 State of the State Address

🌿 A historic collaboration for Hawai'i 🌿

“Today, at the start of a new decade, we have it within our power to change the lives of our working families . . . to change the trajectory of Hawai'i's future.”

On January 1, we welcomed the dawn of not only a new year, but a new decade. For those under 30, that may not seem like a big deal. But for those who grew up without the internet — when *The Lord of the Rings* was a book you read and not a movie you watched — time has a way of sneaking up on us. Could any of us have imagined the changes and discoveries that have already taken place in this century? Smart phones, 3-D printers, Facebook, and self-driving cars. And it seems that each year, change happens faster and faster.

How do you keep up with it all? If we are honest with ourselves, we must admit, we can't. We go along with the flow and hang on for dear life. But the issues that concern our families haven't changed for as long as I can remember: finding a job that pays the bills, dealing with Hawai'i's high cost of living, and taking care of our family. A study sponsored by the Aloha United Way reported that a family of four in Hawai'i needs a combined annual income of \$77,000 just to survive . . . to pay for food, housing, health care, childcare and, yes, taxes.



Governor David Ige describes plans to help the state's working families.

Too many in our community simply gave up and moved away. And so, at the start of this new decade, it is appropriate to ask ourselves: Does it make any sense to continue to do business as usual? **That's why House and Senate leadership, community leaders and my administration got together to look for a better way of helping working families.** We committed to a package of bills that was outlined in our joint press conference to make life better for our working families.

. . . and a moment to remember two fallen heroes



Honolulu Police Chief Susan Ballard at the State of the State address.

Our first responders—whether they are police officers, fire-fighters, or lifeguards—take great pride in their professionalism and great satisfaction in knowing they are serving others and their community. If you ask them, they will tell you to a man and woman that they are just doing their job, even when they step into harm's way. But, in truth, they do so much more, especially when the need for them arises.

On Sunday (Jan. 19), a desperate need did arise, and two heroes stepped forward. I would like us to take a moment of silence for officers **Tiffany Enriquez** and **Kaulike Kalama**. Chief Ballard — Please know that our thoughts and prayers are with the HPD 'ohana and with the families of these two brave officers.

Increased minimum wage, tax relief and other solutions



State leaders are joining forces to reduce costs for families.

The first thing we agreed to do was to put more money into pockets of working people. But how do you increase wages without increasing the cost of living? The two are joined at the hip. Clearly, increasing the minimum wage alone would not do it. But a modest increase phased over time, combined with targeted tax relief, could result in an annual cash benefit of \$4,400 to each worker. We believe we have hit the sweet spot that will make a difference for our working families. Still, some say, that is not enough. And that's why our package also includes **initiatives to reduce the cost of childcare and housing**, two of the biggest expenses in a family's budget.

Education: Reducing the cost of childcare

The proposed bill on expanding affordable childcare complements the proposal we made last year to create a universal public preschool system for 4-year-olds. . . . Today, half of our toddlers, about 20,000 statewide, have no access to childcare or preschool programs. By the end of this decade, we want to eliminate that gap, whether it's through our pre-K classrooms, private preschools, or the proposed Learning to Grow centers. **By the end of the decade, we want every 3- and 4-year-old in Hawai'i to have the opportunity to attend a childcare or preschool.**



Faces of the future: Lunaliilo School students visit the ceremonial room at the State Capitol.

Instead of asking working parents to bring their toddlers to us, let's bring these services to them, whether it's in community centers, in condominium buildings, or suburban shopping malls. Instead of trying to do all of this with just taxpayer dollars, why not leverage those funds through partnerships with private and nonprofit groups? Everything, including our future, begins with how well we educate our children. And that is significantly affected by the kind of beginnings we provide them.

New housing approaches to help working families

In Hawai'i, the biggest expense for working families is housing, whether it's rent or mortgage payments. The spiraling cost of homes is driven by two forces: the high cost of land and real estate speculation. In our joint package of bills, **we propose to build 17,000 affordable homes** over the next decade on state-owned land in partnership with private developers.

The homes would be sold as **leasehold**, effectively removing the biggest cost for developers: land. That, in turn, will dramatically bring down the price of the homes they build. Moreover, as the landlord, the state will be able to keep these homes affordable while allowing leaseholders to reasonably share in the equity when they are ready to sell. In this way, we can ensure that the leasehold property stays affordable forever.

As part of our joint package on housing, we are also proposing to invest **\$200 million for roads and infrastructure** to stimulate interest in **UH housing development plans for its West O'ahu campus**. We are also proposing to provide **\$75 million for affordable housing on the neighbor islands**.

This joint package works hand-in-hand with the progress we made together **to make low- and middle-income rental units available to our working families**. This not only provides for their immediate housing needs but helps them save for the day when they can buy a home of their own.



The Durrett family became homeowners with savings from their affordable rental.

Six years ago, **Krysyan and Kahi Durrett**, both born and raised in Hawai'i, were like a lot of young couples dreaming of coming home to the islands. They started out living with family when Jonathan was offered a full-time job here. But with three young children, they knew their living arrangement would no longer work. Fortunately, they were able to qualify for an affordable rental in Ewa Beach, built by Mutual Housing with state assistance. That allowed the Durrett family to save enough money for a down payment on a home of their own.

"Had it not been for affordable housing projects like Ko'oloa'ula, we wouldn't be able to raise our children here," said Krysyan. "We want to thank the governor, legislators and community leaders who are building affordable housing so many more young families can make Hawai'i their home."

Hope for homelessness: One family's story <https://youtu.be/CtJsmXZrTH8>

Building homes is not just about building houses, but also about nurturing communities. From the start of this administration, working with the legislature and the private sector, we have made reducing homelessness a priority.

At the time, Hawai'i had the highest per capita rate of homelessness in the country. Between 2016 and 2019, we increased the number of homeless moving into permanent housing by 73 percent. On average, we have moved **over 600 homeless individuals into permanent housing each month.**

Homelessness can happen to just about anyone. Just ask construction worker **Kalani Lautele**, whose rent was suddenly doubled in 2016. Lautele and his children found themselves homeless and desperate. He was referred to **the state's Family Assessment Center (FAC) in Kaka'ako**, which we developed together to help homeless families find stable housing and other support services, provided by Catholic Charities.

After a two-month stay at the Center, the Lautele family was able to move into a home in Kalihi, but that's not the end of their story. Kalani needed a way to "pay forward" the help he was given. He continues to visit the Center, bringing his chil-



The Iges with the Lautele family, who successfully overcame homelessness.

dren and the youth football team he coaches to help with outreach events and donations for the families there. Why does he bring his team to the FAC? "For a lot of reasons — mainly so they can appreciate what they have and find ways to help other folks when they need it," he said.

I would also like to recognize Lt. Gov. Josh Green for his work on the H4 initiative. This initiative provides medical services for homeless individuals through Joint Outreach Centers in Chiinatown and Kāne'ohe. The lieutenant governor has focused on health concerns of the homeless and is also working on other projects, like the Kauhale Village concept.

Agriculture and self-sufficiency: Sensei Farms, Mahi Pono

Perhaps the longest transition we have experienced recently has been the transformation of our agricultural industry from large-scale farming to more diversified farms. But there is one important difference in today's efforts from yesterday's: And that's technology. As in other fields, we have seen the rise of technology change the face of everything in society. In agriculture, it too has been a game changer. It has enabled farmers to produce higher yields in the field and more precise targeting strategies in the marketplace. Consequently, we are seeing a greater willingness to invest in local agricultural endeavors.

Over the last several weeks, we have seen a number of news articles on agricultural start-ups. **Mahi Pono**, which bought 41,000 acres of former sugar cane land, is raising potatoes in central Maui. And they want to plant another 120 acres of citrus trees and 20 acres of non-GMO papayas. Their plans also include growing avocados, bell peppers, guava, lilikoi, oranges, lemons and limes. **Sensei Farms** is transforming agriculture on Lana'i by using a mix of proven and innovative technology to power its hydroponic greenhouses on former pineapple fields. This mix of traditional farming and new technology is the wave of the future for agriculture statewide. I would also like to acknowledge state senators Donovan Dela Cruz and Mike Gabbard and representatives Richard Onishi and Richard Creagan, who have long been strong advocates for agriculture in Hawai'i.



Gov. Ige with En Young and Molly Stanek of Sensei Farms Lana'i, on high-tech ag.

Hawai'i leading the way on clean energy

How do we sustain our economy, our lifestyle and our natural environment? We do it first by developing clean energy sources. With a flurry of commercial solar projects in the pipeline and local homeowners' enthusiasm for residential solar power, we will exceed our 2020 goal of attaining 30 percent of our energy needs from renewable sources.

The significance of this initial pivot to clean and renewable energy cannot be overstated. We have become a leader in this effort, and our actions have inspired other states to follow. Since we set a goal to become carbon negative by 2045,

four other states have followed our lead. So far, we have successfully reduced our greenhouse gas emissions and will meet our goal for 2020. And our utilities are meeting our clean electricity goals faster and at record low prices.

Today, 37 percent of O'ahu's single-family residences have rooftop solar. On certain days, Kaua'i is already achieving 100 percent of electricity from clean energy sources, decades ahead of when we thought this would be possible. We will continue to aggressively engage in actions that will continue to decarbonize our economy and make our environment whole.

Sustaining our economy and culture

In 2019, the Hawai'i Tourism Authority shifted its priorities from increasing visitor arrivals to improving the visitor experience, while supporting the quality of life for residents. Through **HTA's Aloha 'Āina program**, 28 non-profit and government agencies were given funding for programs to help protect Hawai'i's natural resources. Through its **Kūkula Ola program**, the authority has funded 28 programs this year and committed to fund 43 more programs in 2020 that perpetuate Hawaiian culture.



The Hōkūle'a came to symbolize a new era of wayfinding and discovery.

And while we are on the subject of Native Hawaiian culture, I want to speak on the **Thirty Meter Telescope and Mauna Kea**. Emotions have run high on both sides. The arguments are strong on both sides, and that's what makes the situation so difficult. **But I truly believe it can be resolved, if we put our heads and our hearts together.** There are some who have encouraged me to take strong measures against those who are protesting on Mauna Kea. That would have been the easier course. But it is not just the authority of the law that is at stake. **What is also at risk is the glue that has always bound us together: our sense of aloha.** It is the thing that underpins our laws and gives them meaning and an ethical foundation. That trust in each other is also sacred. And I will not break that bond, no matter how convenient or easy.

At the heart of our dilemma is both the history of wayfinding and discovery and the future of wayfinding and discovery. If we have lost our way, we must find our way back. To do this, we must be open-hearted, as well as open-minded. We must listen, as well as speak with conviction, and we must have aloha for each other, in spite of our differences. I ask all to join me in continuing to look for a way forward. I stand ready to work with any and everyone who refuses to let this issue divide us.

A new urgency for the 'āina: climate change

There is a new danger threatening the 'āina, and it comes from climate change. No one need tell us how global warming is directly impacting our lives . . . Recently, Time Magazine named Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg its 2019 Person of the Year. She believes we all have a part to play in preventing climate change. Adults often talk about sustainability and the future. But for those under 21, it is more about your future than ours. It is your support and participation that transform those policies into meaningful actions. Just ask the graduates of **KUPU, a nonprofit youth organization dedicated to conservation efforts in their communities.**



Gov. Ige honored KUPU CEO John Leong and alumnus Sean McDonough for their efforts.

Today, at the start of a new decade, we have it within our power to change the lives of our working families. We have it within our power to change the trajectory of Hawai'i's future. That is the underlying belief of this joint package by the House, the Senate, my administration, and the community. It is time for us to put some skin in the game. **I believe in Hawai'i, and I believe in all of you. Let's get to work.**

GOVERNOR DAVID IGE'S CABINET (*pending Senate confirmation, except for DOE and UH)



Contact Us: Executive Chambers, State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 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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