



Ke Ala Hou

A New Path Forward

Ke Ke'ena O Ke Kia'aina | Office of the Governor • July 2024

GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE



Governor Josh Green, M.D.

In this edition of our newsletter, we highlight the inspiring graduations on the neighbor islands and celebrate the signing of bills to help with the cost of living in Hawai'i. We also signed bills supporting our Native Hawaiian communities, making health care

more accessible, and helping our health care workforce stay in Hawai'i.

In addition, we share a glimpse of a historic event that we were deeply honored to have hosted, the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture (FestPAC). This extraordinary 10-day festival provided a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to showcase Hawai'i's cultural heritage and build deeper connections within our Pacific Islander Nations.

Mahalo to all the cultural practitioners, artisans, and the commissioners who worked tirelessly for years, alongside our dedicated Festival Director, Aaron Salā to bring FestPAC to fruition. Also, thank you to our indigenous institutions and nonprofits, and our community for making this a successful festival. This has been an amazing endeavor, and we are proud of how our diverse nations came together to make this extraordinary event a reality.

Mahalo,

Josh Green M.D.

Hawai'i Hosts FestPAC for the First Time and Strengthens its Bonds with Island Nations



Governor Green and First Lady Green pose for a photo at the Festival Village opening.

Governor Josh Green, M.D., First Lady Jaime Kanani Green, and festival organizers had the honor of hosting the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture (FestPAC) in Hawai'i for the first time in the festival's 52 year history. This event is the world's largest celebration of indigenous Pacific Islanders and brought together 25 nations from across the Pacific. Various events were conducted on O'ahu from June 6-16, 2024, showcasing and celebrating each nation's arts, culture, and traditions.

"It was truly a historic and unforgettable occasion to welcome guests and festival participants from across the Pacific and beyond to our beautiful state. FestPAC embodies the spirit of unity and diversity, and we hope it provided a memorable and enriching experience for all," said Governor Green.

More than 2,200 delegates gathered for 10 days of cultural exchange, appreciation, and celebration at various venues across the island. In addition, there were 50-plus festival events free and open to the public, including opening and closing ceremonies, performances at the Festival Village, heritage dances, contemporary music performances, heritage arts demonstrations, visual arts exhibits, and more.

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Ke Ala Hou intends to elevate, recognize, and celebrate the hard work done by our state departments. Our goal is to share top achievements from our state employees, emphasize aloha and kindness in action, and demonstrate caring leadership at the state level. It is our hope that by sharing these stories, we build trust and understanding in what we do everyday in service to you.



Scan the QR code to view our digital newsletter.





Hawai'i Hosts FestPAC for the First Time

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"We are one 'ohana. We are here to celebrate, to share our knowledge, our culture, our traditions, and to honor our ancestors and the ancient wisdom, so that we can be custodians of the Pacific. We are the people of the Pacific, we are the soul of the Pacific," added First Lady Jaime Kanani Green.

Primary FestPAC events included an opening ceremony with performances, speeches, and a parade of nations; an Ecumenical Service to unite attendees in reflection and prayer; a Festival Village at the Hawai'i Convention Center featuring traditional heritage art demonstrations like kapa making, weaving, jewelry crafting, chanting, and dancing; and a closing ceremony to reflect and celebrate the festival's conclusion.

Additional FestPAC events included art exhibits at Capitol Modern and the Hawai'i Convention Center; a carving and tattoo showcase at the Bishop Museum; conferences, symposia, an expo at the Hawai'i Convention Center; and a wa'a community festival at Kualoa Regional Park. Heritage dance and music groups were featured at various venues across O'ahu.

"For over 50 years, FestPAC has served as the primary stage for honoring and preserving Pacific arts and culture. It offers Hawai'i a rare and unparalleled chance to exhibit our cultural legacy alongside our broader Pacific 'ohana, nurturing a greater comprehension and respect for the collective identity of the Pacific," said Aaron J. Salā, Ph.D., festival director of the 13th FestPAC.

The 25 Pacific Island nations that attended the 13th FestPAC were American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Easter Island (Rapa Nui), Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Hawai'i, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Norfolk Island, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna, and Taiwan.

Since its inception in 1972, FestPAC has been an important venue for cultural conservation, revitalization, creativity, innovation, and diplomacy for the Pacific community. In collaboration with the Pacific Community and the Council of Pacific Arts and Culture, FestPAC takes place every four years in a different Pacific Island nation. Hawai'i was originally scheduled to host FestPAC in 2020, but it was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To learn more about FestPAC, visit www.festpachawaii.org.



Historic Bills Signed to Improve Hawai'i's Cost of Living



Governor Josh Green, M.D., recently signed two major pieces of legislation, House Bill (HB) 2404 and Senate Bill (SB) 1035, into law. HB 2404 provides significant tax relief to Hawai'i's families. It's the largest income tax cut for working families in the state's history and makes the tax code more progressive.

"This legislation is a historic step toward addressing the financial challenges and the cost-of-living crisis faced by Hawai'i's working families," said Governor Green. "By doubling the standard deduction and amending the tax brackets, HB 2404 provides much-needed tax relief to our residents."

HB 2404 amends two key components of Hawai'i's tax code over a seven-year period. In odd years, the legislation increases the standard deduction, which benefits low- and medium-income households. In even years, the legislation amends the tax brackets by eliminating the lowest brackets and lowering the tax rates for all brackets. As a result of these changes, the

state income taxes paid by working class families will fall 71% by 2031.

This legislation will help Hawai'i transition from being the second highest-taxed state for working families to the fourth-lowest.

In addition to the historic tax reform, Governor Green also signed into law SB 1035, which exempts certain medical services from the general excise tax (GET). This legislation will provide relief to the healthcare system in Hawai'i by specifically exempting hospitals, infirmaries, medical clinics, health care facilities, pharmacies, and medical and dental providers from the GET on goods or services that are reimbursed through Medicaid, Medicare, or TRICARE.

"This law is a significant step toward relieving financial burdens and stimulating economic growth in our healthcare sector," said Governor Green. "By exempting healthcare and dental services reimbursed for these critical programs from the GET, we will promote increased equity and access to healthcare and strengthen our healthcare infrastructure. As a former ER physician working in a rural community, I can confidently say that this legislation will be especially beneficial for rural healthcare providers and patients."

SB 1035 received endorsements from more than 155 healthcare professionals and is seen as a potential solution to the state's shortage of nearly 800 physicians. A recent survey of physicians by the John A. Burns School of Medicine found that the elimination of the GET on medical services could be an effective means of recruiting and maintaining more physicians.

National Recruitment for Next UH President is Underway



The Charlot mural inside Bachman Hall, the loia that UH has been using for the president's search.

The national recruitment for the next president of the University of Hawai'i 10-campus system officially began in May 2024 with the goal of having a new president in place by early 2025.

The UH Board of Regents (BOR) approved the position description and leadership profile at its May 16 BOR meeting. Both were based on feedback provided through six public forums on four islands (565 people attended in-person and virtually) and a public survey (2,093 responses), along with input from the regents and the Presidential Search Advisory Group (PSAG). PSAG also developed the position description and leadership profile.

"We are very pleased that the next phase of the search can officially begin, and the regents thank the PSAG for their important work," said BOR Interim Chair Gabriel Lee. "We are hoping there is a lot of local and national interest in the position and that we are able to attract the best candidates possible."

The timeline for the search was approved by the regents on March 21.

- May to August—Candidate recruitment period
- August—Review of candidate materials, first round of candidate interviews
- September—Three to four finalists named
- October—Final selection and negotiation, new president is announced
- Early 2025—New president begins

The PSAG is made up of stakeholders from across the UH system and local community who are tasked with reviewing candidate applications, interviewing the first round of eight to 12 candidates and recommending semifinalists to the selection committee, which consists of all 11 regents.

The new president will succeed President David Lassner, who announced in September that he will retire at the end of 2024.



Commencement season highlighted by UH graduations on Maui and Moloka'i

Maui

Commencement season wrapped up in May 2024, with dozens of high school and college graduation ceremonies across Hawai'i, including two very special University of Hawai'i (UH) Maui College graduations.

On May 9, UH Maui hosted its first commencement since the 2023 wildfires, with about 220 students participating. The theme of the ceremony was "resilience."

"We wanted to celebrate the fact that our students have endured so much, not just only through the pandemic, but also through the wildfires, and they came out okay," said UH Maui Chancellor Lui Hokoana. We wanted to celebrate their resilient spirit."

UH Maui College students, staff, and community volunteers produced about 200,000 meals after the wildfires as the college served as a food hub for fire relief efforts.



Moloka'i

In May, UH hosted a graduation ceremony on Moloka'i to honor 42 graduates for the first time since 2016. Usually observed every four years, the ceremony was not held in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The graduates attended classes at the UH Maui Moloka'i Education Center and online to earn their degrees.

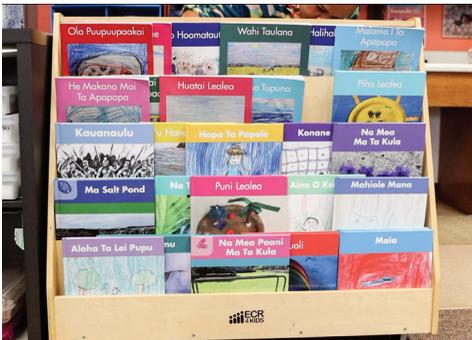
After a 23-year journey, 41-year-old Harriet U'ilani Mokiao proudly earned her associate degree in liberal arts and delivered one of the student addresses.

"We really need to live in the present having learned from the past," Mokiao said during her address. "There's an 'ōlelo no'ēau (Hawaiian proverb) that reads ma ka hana ka 'ike, ma ka 'ike ka mana. Through work, through doing, comes knowledge and through knowledge comes power."

Between 2021 and 2024, the UH Moloka'i Education Center awarded 47 associate degrees and 52 certificates. More than 50% of the graduates are Native Hawaiian.



Preserving the Ni'ihau Dialect Through Student-Created Books



Books written and illustrated by Ni'ihau's students.

On the West side of Kaua'i, a small but determined charter school is working to preserve a language important to its community. Ke Kula Niihau O Kekaha, the only 'Ōlelo Ni'ihau immersion school in the state, has empowered its students from preschool to 12th grade to author more than 400 books in the Ni'ihau dialect of the Hawaiian language since 2018, creating a vibrant literary legacy.

The school's mission is to strengthen and perpetuate the Ni'ihau dialect of Hawaiian among the children and youth of the Ni'ihau community. Po'o Tumu (Principal) Tia Koerte said, "there were zero materials published in our language; a lot of it was handwritten or delivered orally." Koerte explained that this lack of resources led them to partner with Hamline University in Minnesota to create books that would resonate with her students.

Each year, every student from preschool to 12th grade authors at least one book. Koerte and her team select a different genre and topic for students to write about each year.

"It is also important to see our language written in different forms, not only to challenge our students in writing in different forms, but also to ho'opa'a (to solidify) that and make sure that as time passes on and people pass on, it is now kept - mālama ia (nurtured), in all of these books that are published," said Koerte.

Their goal is to publish 1,000 books in 'Ōlelo Ni'ihau, ensuring that the Ni'ihau dialect continues to thrive for generations to come.

(Note: The Ni'ihau dialect does not use diacriticals, however, the Office of the Governor editorial style is to include them.)

Ke Ala Hou is a monthly publication of the Office of Governor Josh Green, M.D.
We invite you to stay connected with us!



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