



Senator Joy San Buenaventura

Senate District 2, Puna

- Chair, Senate Committee on Health & Human Services
- Senate Committee on the Judiciary

@sensasbuenaventura

May 2026 E-Newsletter

MAY 2026 UPDATE FROM THE LEGISLATURE

Aloha:

On May 7th, 2026, the Hawaii State Legislature finalized all of the bills to be transmitted to the Governor and adjourned Sine Die. Leading up to the final filing deadline, we endured many late night negotiations and early morning hearings, but I am very happy with the results and I look forward to sharing some of our legislative highlights. Every session the legislature must confront a variety of challenges and 2026 was no exception. While economic uncertainty and statewide emergencies during the session created many unanticipated needs, the legislature worked together to identify our most critical priorities and come to agreement on the budget. As Chair of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services, I remained especially disciplined when vetting any legislation that had fiscal impacts and explored creative options to continue our support for the most vital programs in our communities. As a result of our collective work, I am happy to report that we were able to preserve the previously enacted income tax relief for Hawaii's working families while passing legislation that addresses both the immediate and long-term needs of our state. I believe that our work this session reflects our commitment to helping local families and I am very grateful for the legislature's collective efforts to continue to move us in the right direction. The biggest highlight is SB3125- where we were able to preserve promised tax breaks for those families earning less than \$350K

Some of you have seen me recently in KHON or HNN talking about the potential HMSA/HPHA merger (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-2JMxQkEVO>) or the pilot program covering Kauai and Hawaii Islands giving more treatment access for the mentally ill or even my controversial No vote on the Chief Justice of Hawaii (<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2026/04/23/chief-justice-nominee-grilled-over-ties-powerful-political-action-committee/>). If you have any questions about these, please do not hesitate to contact my office at any time.

Joy San Buenaventura



May 1st - The Senate ends its 6:30pm session. Due to the filing deadline for fiscal bills, it is customary for the legislature convene the floor sessions much later than usual in order to give the House and Senate precious extra time to negotiate on important bills and bring them for a vote. After a long day of hearings, the conference committee chairs and the drafting teams then begin working to ensure that all conference committee reports and conference drafts (finalized versions of the bills) are filed before tonight's deadline. Many Legislators and their staff work through the night.



In Loving Memory: Pi'ilani Ka'awaloa

It is with a heavy heart that we mourn the loss of beloved teacher, community representative, and cultural practitioner, Pi'ilani Ka'awaloa. Known affectionately as "Aunty Pi'i," Pi'ilani Ka'awaloa's remarkable legacy is perpetuated in the community, culture, and lāhui that she so honorably embodied. A central figure in the Puna community, Pi'ilani Ka'awaloa's life and legacy will forever serve as an inspiration for all who dedicate themselves to the perpetuation of Hawaiian Culture, language, and traditions. On Behalf of the Thirty-Third Legislature of the State of Hawai'i, we extend our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Pi'ilani Ka'awaloa and offer our deepest sympathies to all who mourn her passing.

DISTRICT 2, Puna: Outstanding Students

Recognizing and honoring Pacific & Asian Affairs Council Student Ambassador to Korea **Bodhi Parker**.

Recognizing and honoring Pacific & Asian Affairs Council Student Ambassador to the Philippines **Hunter Lee**.

2026 GRADUATION SCHEDULE

Hilo High: Friday, May 22, 2026, 6:30 p.m. Edith Kanaka'ole Multi-Purpose Stadium

Honoka'a High: Saturday, May 23, 2026, 9 a.m. HHIS Gym (The Armory)

Ka'ū High & Pāhala Elementary: Friday, May 22, 2026, 5 p.m. Robert Herks Ka'ū District Gymnasium

Ke Kula 'o 'Ehunuikaimalino: Friday, May 22, 2026, 12 p.m. Konawaena High Julian Yates Baseball Field

Kea'au High: Thursday, May 21, 2026, 4 p.m. KHS Cougar Stadium

Kealakehe High: Saturday, May 23, 2026, 6 p.m. KHS Waveriders Stadium

Kohala High: Saturday, May 23, 2026, 2 p.m. Isao Hisaoka Gym (Kamehameha Park)

Konawaena High: Saturday, May 23, 2026, 9 a.m. KHS Julian Yates Football Field

Pāhoa High & Intermediate: Saturday, May 23, 2026, 6 p.m. PHIS Helene H. Hale Gym

Waiākea High: Saturday, May 23, 2026, 6 p.m. Edith Kanaka'ole Multi-Purpose Stadium





Collecting donations for the YWCA “Dress for Success” program (organized by myself and Rep. Greg Takayama). The donations were collected through a clothing drive in which legislators, staff, and community members contributed new or gently used professional attire to support women entering or reentering the workforce. For more than 20 years, Dress for Success Honolulu has supported women at every stage of their employment journey through professional attire, career coaching, and a strong network of support. The program provides one-on-one interview styling and continued wardrobe support after employment, along with career resources such as resume development and coaching.



Hearing on the Governor’s nomination of Vladimir Devens for Chief Justice of the Hawaii Supreme Court. As a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee it is my job to carefully vet Judicial nominees. Hearing like this provide the committee members to opportunity to ask the nominee questions while simultaneously giving the nominee an opportunity to address any potential conflicts and assure the Senate that they are right for the position. Like many, I had questions for the nominee and brought up some of the concerns that have been shared by fellow legislators and the public.



Chairing a conference committee hearing with my Co-Chair Sen. Kanuha and Sen. Keohokalole. Representing the House were Chairs Rep. Takayama and Rep. Matayoshi. Also present for this hearing was Speaker of the House Rep. Nadine Nakamura and advocates of SB2175. Conference committee hearings are where chairs representing the House and Senate come together to agree to a final version of a bill. If no agreement can be made and/or the conference committee does not receive fiscal release in time, the bill does not make it to the floor for a final reading. I am happy to report that this hearing was a success (SB2175 will now go to the Governor).

2026 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS



BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS



Senate District 2 Puna, Sen. Joy San Buenaventura

HIGHWAY 130 IMPROVEMENTS

\$2,000,000 – Plans, design, and construction for Highway 130 improvements in Keaau Transfer Station.

PAHOA LIBRARY AND TRANSIT HUB

\$2,000,000 – Plans, design, and land acquisition for Pahoa Library and Transit Hub.

KEAAU OUTPATIENT CENTER

\$50,000,000 Design, construction, and equipment for site work for a new ambulatory care center in Keaau.

HAWAII HEALTH SYSTEMS CORP

\$9,800,000 FY26 & 27 – New facilities, renovation, expansion, and/or replacement of facilities for the Hawaii region.

POHOIKI BAY IMPROVEMENTS

\$1,000,000 – Plans, design, and permitting for breakwater structures and appurtenant work.

POHOIKI SAFE SWIM AREA

\$200,000 – Plans and design including feasibility study and site selection for the construction of safe swim area.

ALTERNATE ROUTE PUNA

\$1,500,000 – Plans for alternative route for Puna Makai. \$1,000,000 for Puna Mauka.

RTE 11/ MAMAKI MERGE & CONGESTION STUDY

\$1,450,000+290,000 – Plans, design, and construction to add an acceleration lane from Mamaki Street onto Route 11 going Hilo Bound.

2026 GRANT-IN-AID



BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS



Senate District 2 Puna, Sen. Joy San Buenaventura

\$170,000

PUNA COMMUNITY MEDICAL CENTER FOUNDATION

Puna Community Medical Center Foundation, for costs related to construction of a medical campus.



\$220,000

MALAMA O PUNA

Malama o Puna, for costs related to addressing critical challenges in food security, invasive species control, and economic development and protection.

\$135,000

VOLCANO ART CENTER

Volcano Arts Center, for costs related to upgrading technology and staff training to support art organization operations.



\$294,250

HAWAII FLORICULTURE AND NURSERY ASSOCIATION

Hawaii Floriculture and Nursery Association, for costs related to sustaining and expanding the floriculture industry.

\$150,000

HAWAII ARTS & SCIENCES CENTER

Purchase and installation of Hawaii Arts & Sciences office trailer



HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES: ADVISE AND CONSENT



The Senate Committee on Health and Human Services (HHS) is referred all nominations relating to subjects under the committee's purview. As Chair of HHS, I lead a vote with the members as to whether the committee advises that the Senate confirm the nominee's appointment. I take very seriously the responsibility of ensuring that the people leading our state agencies and boards are qualified and accountable to the public.



With Senate President Kouchi congratulating Bronson Kobayashi (flew in from the Big Island). As Chair of HHS, I recommended to the advise and consent of Bronson's nomination to the Commission on Fatherhood.



On the Senate floor introducing Andrew Michael Kennedy, the Governor's nominee to the District Court of the Third Circuit, Island of Hawaii. I spoke in favor of Mr. Kennedy's nomination and I was pleased that all members present voted in favor of his nomination.

PĀHOA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL Master Plan Community Meeting



**WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2026
5:00-6:30 PM**

**Pāhoā Elementary School Gym
15-3030 Pāhoā Village Road, Pāhoā, HI 96778**



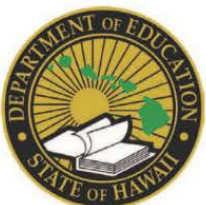
ABOUT THE PĀHOA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MASTER PLAN

The State of Hawai'i, Department of Education (DOE) is proposing phased improvements to the Pāhoā Elementary School campus, including a new classroom building, an Administration and Library center, a Cafeteria, an outdoor playground and covered playcourt, plus other infrastructure improvements. Also, a portion of the campus is earmarked to develop a Pre-Kindergarten building, which will be executed by others.

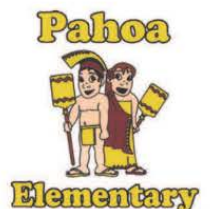


ABOUT THE COMMUNITY MEETING

The DOE, its design consultant, Mitsunaga & Associates, Inc., and its planner, PBR HAWAII & Associates, Inc., will be sharing their conceptual plans for proposed improvements to the Pāhoā Elementary School campus. Please join us to review the conceptual plans and provide your input.



**For more information, please contact
Makena Bassett, PBR HAWAII & Associates, Inc., at:
mbassett@pbrhawaii.com**





GOVERNMENT GRANT SCAM?

KNOW THE SIGNS

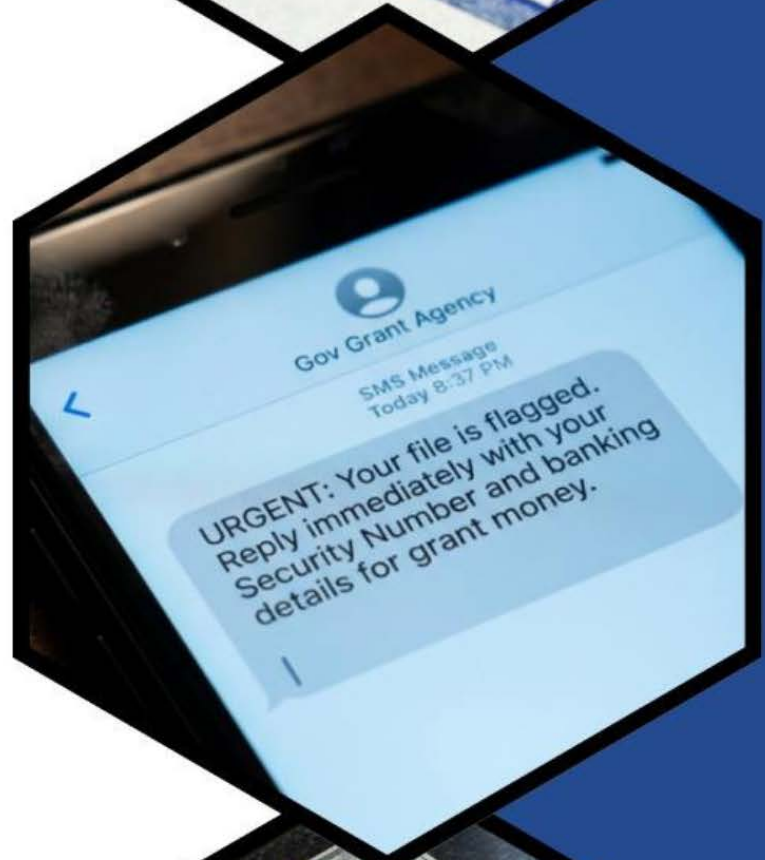
Scammers pretend to offer “free government money” — but it’s a trap.

Red Flags:

- You’re contacted out of the blue about a “grant”
- They say you can use it for personal expenses
- They ask for your Social Security number
- They request your bank info to “deposit funds”
- They demand fees (cash, gift cards, crypto)

Remember:

- Real grants are for organizations, not personal use
- You won’t be contacted unless you applied
- You never have to pay to receive a grant





GET READY

After School Plus (A+)
registration opens
Wednesday, April 22, 3 p.m.



More information

<https://hawaiipublicschools.org/2026-hidoe-after-school-program/>



Register online

- HIDEO A+ website: <https://hawaiicommunityengagement.com/after-school-plus/>
- Or at the A+ provider's website: YMCA of Honolulu, Kama'āina Kids, Dream Co., Maui YMCA)



Program fees

For the 2026-27 school year, the A+ program monthly fee is \$240. Monthly fees are due on the first program day of each month.

Income-eligible families may apply for financial assistance through the state Department of Human Services' A+ subsidy program.

SCAM ALERT:

FAKE CALLS REGARDING UNCLAIMED FUNDS

Got a call or text saying you're owed thousands in unclaimed property? Be careful, it could be a scam. Fraudsters often pose as government agencies, claiming you have money, stocks, or other assets waiting for you. Their goal is to trick you into giving up money or personal information.

- #1: Don't click on links in unexpected messages.** State unclaimed property programs won't text you about funds—but scammers will.
- #2: Go to your state's official .gov website first.** Every state lets you search for unclaimed funds for free. Start at unclaimed.org/search/ to find your state's office.
- #3: Report the scam.** If it feels like a scam, report it at ReportFraud.ftc.gov, and share the warning with others so they don't fall for it too.





Hawai'i State Department of Education

HERetoHELP

Support Student Well-Being and Mental Health

REFRESHED WEBSITE

For
Students

For
Families

For
Staff

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT



Visit

HERETOHELPHIDOE.COM or HERETOHELP.HIDOE.US

PUNA HONGWANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE ANNUAL PUNA DISTRICT INTERFAITH MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVANCE

**This years marks the 79th
Anniversary of the war
memorial monument**

Remember & Honor

*Participating are Hawaii County
Band and Hilo High School JROTC*



**Guest Speaker
Lt. Col.
Timothy
Alvarado**

Saturday, May 23, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

Puna District heroes we honor and remember

WORLD WAR II (1941-1945): Stanley Cabral, Yuzo Hayashida, John Hernandez, Seiji Higa, Isamu Kanetani, Yutaka Kawamoto, Morio Mizumoto, Frank Mugihira, Shoichi Nakahara, Tadao Nakamura, Mitsuru Ochiai, Eishin Oshiro, Seikichi Oshiro, Kazumi Tsutsui, and Alfred Veriato

Korean Conflict (1950-1954): David Aspili, Julio Firgueroa, Yoshimi Fukumoto, Isaac K. Hale, Koichi Moriwaki, Wilson Park, and Paul K. Ura

Vietnam Conflict (1965-1973): Moses I Kuahiwinui Jr, George G. Luis, Gilbert Olivar, Hayward. K. Peleiholani and George S. Salema

Iraq-Afghanistan Conflict (2001-2014): Ray M. Furhmann II and Kirk Takeshi Fuchigami Jr.

Join us in the social hall for light refreshments.



For life-threatening emergencies, call 911.

For non-life-threatening emergencies, call (808) 935-3311.

For the Fire Department, call (808) 961-8336.



PROPER 911 USE

Learn when and how to use 911 for emergencies to ensure a quick and effective response.



POLICE DIRECTORY

Access contact information for HPD departments, stations, and specialized units.



CRIME STOPPERS

Submit anonymous tips about crimes or suspicious activity to help keep our community safe.



ANIMAL CONTROL

Report stray or dangerous animals, access lost-and-found services, or learn about licensing and care.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Find support, counseling, and emergency resources for victims of domestic violence.



KULEANA HOTLINE

Share non-emergency community concerns confidentially to improve neighborhood safety.



REPORT AN UNSAFE DRIVER

Notify authorities about reckless, impaired, or dangerous driving behavior.



GET A COPY OF A POLICE REPORT

Request copies of police reports for legal, personal, or insurance purposes.



SUBMIT A TIP ABOUT AN UNSOLVED CASE

Provide confidential information to assist investigations.

Hawaii Child Wellness Incentive Program (HCWIP)

Earn \$50 per child per year for taking your child to a well-child examination visit!

Easy as 1-2-3!



See a doctor Submit Application Get card by mail

- 1) Take your child for a well-child examination
- 2) Submit completed DHS 1193 application form
[DHS 1193 Form and Instructions \(Rev. 05.2024\).pdf](#)
- 3) Receive a \$50 incentive card by mail

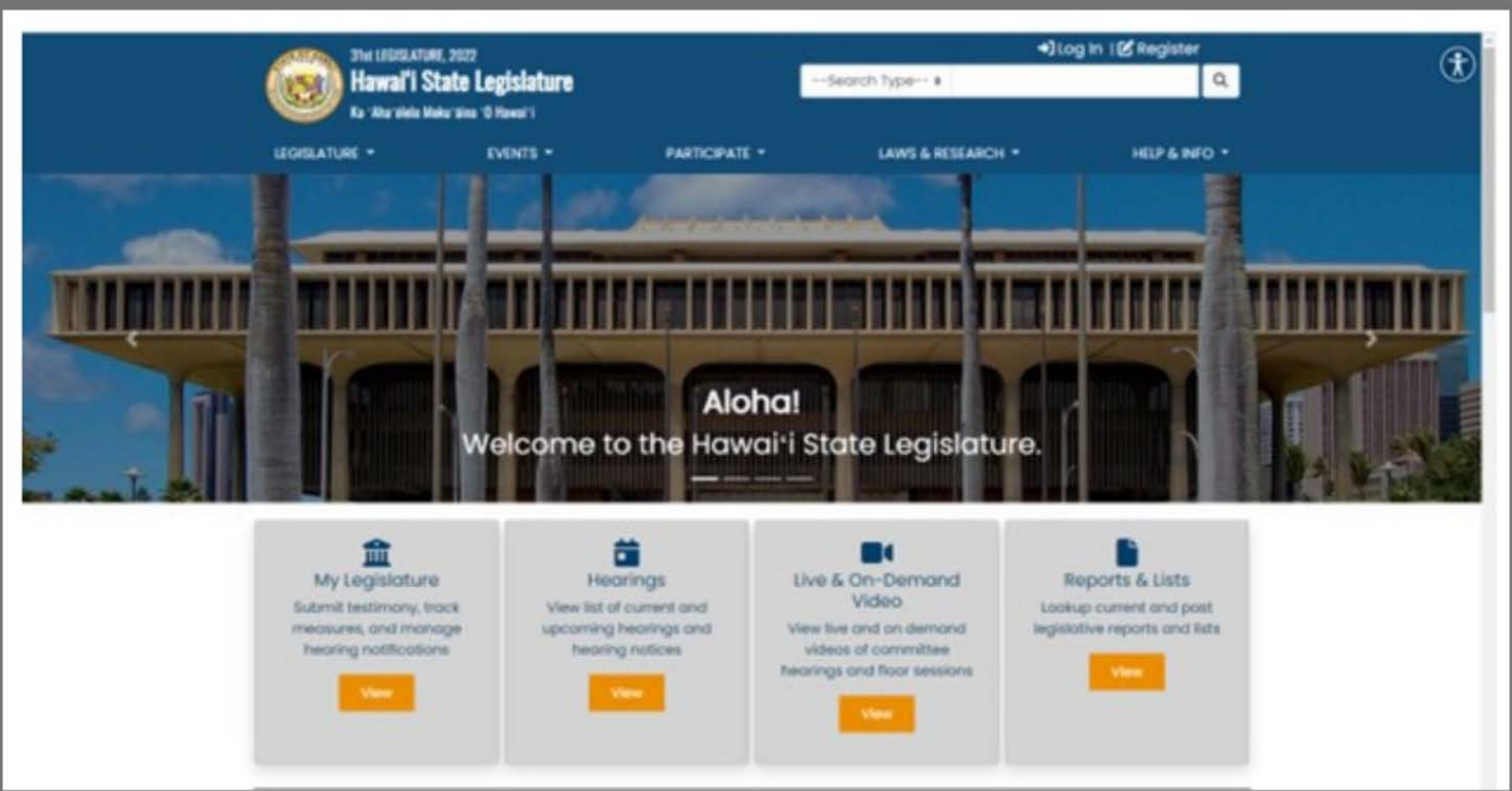
The Hawaii Child Wellness Incentive Pilot program (HCWIP) seeks to ensure the health of children in Hawaii, including early detection of potential illnesses. This program awards a \$50.00 incentive card to any parent who is a Medicaid/QUEST member for taking their child under the age of 18 to complete a well-child examination once per year. The child does not need to be a Medicaid/QUEST member.

**For Customer Service Call:
833-909-3631**



“Keeping Our Growing Keiki Healthy”

Legislative Reference Bureau: Public Access Room



The Public Access Room (PAR) provides the public with information, facilities, and services to assist them as they engage and participate in the State legislative process. PAR's website includes guides on how to track measures, submit testimony, and subscribe to hearing notices.

To learn more, please visit: <https://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/>