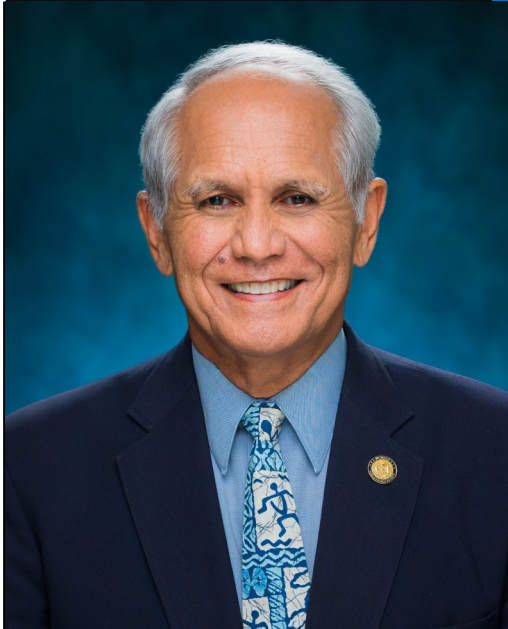




The Senate
STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII

Senator Mike Gabbard

September 2020 Vol. 14 Issue 9



Aloha e Friends,

I hope you and your 'ohana are safe and well. The COVID-19 crisis continues to affect us all in so many ways. As I watch the evening news each night, I'm saddened by the discord, rancor, divisiveness, intolerance and violence being displayed across America.

I'm hoping and praying that each of us will take personal responsibility for our own actions, and do our best to be humble, tolerant, kind, compassionate and loving to each other, as we seek solutions in the public arena, as well as in our own personal lives. It will take massive amounts of genuine aloha, but I'm confident we can do it. Hawai'i should be the template for the world to follow in dealing with these chaotic times.

**COMMITTEE
CHAIR**

**AGRICULTURE &
ENVIRONMENT**

MEMBER

- ◆ Judiciary
- ◆ Labor, Culture & the Arts

DISTRICT 20

- ◆ Kapolei, Makakilo and portions of Ewa, Kalaeloa and Waipahu

I completed my 14th session as your State Senator on July 10. Given the pandemic, this was definitely the most difficult session of my time in the Senate. This newsletter serves as my annual legislative update to provide you with an overview of what happened at the Capitol during the 2020 Legislative Session. Please continue following all the mask and physical distancing recommendations and protect yourself and family during this pandemic. Stay safe!

As always, please contact me at 808-586-6830 or sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov if I can help you or your family in any way. Also follow me on [Twitter @senmikegabbard](https://twitter.com/senmikegabbard), [Instagram @sengabbard](https://www.instagram.com/sengabbard), or Facebook at [facebook.com/senmikegabbard](https://www.facebook.com/senmikegabbard)

2020 Legislative Session Overview

There was a total of 2,336 bills introduced during the 2020 Legislative Session (1,156 in the House and 1,180 in the Senate). Of those, 82 bills passed the Legislature. The Governor has three choices for the bills that passed: he can sign the bills into law, allow the bills to become law without his signature, or veto the bills. The deadline for the Governor to notify the Legislature if he intends to veto any of the bills was August 31. September 15 is the deadline for the Governor to veto bills and for the Legislature to come back into Special Session to override any of those vetoes. Please let the Governor know how you feel about any of the legislation by calling him at 586-0034 or filling out the "Contact Us" form here: <https://governor.hawaii.gov/contact-us/comments-on-legislation/>. As far as our state spending, here's a breakdown of the total amounts for the appropriations

made by the Legislature for Fiscal Years 2019 – 2021: (Cont. p.2)



Sen. Gabbard's Official 2020 Staff photo: (L-R: Skylar Geasey, UH Manoa Intern and Legislative Assistant; Tonya Miller, Legislative Assistant; Meg Turner, Office Manager; Rock Riggs, Committee Clerk; Sydney Williams, Assistant Committee Clerk; and Jami Chapman, HPU Intern and Legislative Assistant.)



DISTRICT 20 NEWS

(Cont. from p. 1)

Operating (state employee salaries and department/agency expenses)

FY 2019-2020 - \$15,340,887,786

FY 2020-2021 - \$15,672,211,865

Capital Improvement Program (construction of state projects)

FY 2019-2020 - \$2,302,981,000

FY 2020-2021 - \$2,764,956,000

Construction Funding for Senate District 20

Senate District 20 did very well with the passage of the state's capital budget in HB 2725. There's a total of \$186,450,000 in additional projects for our community. Mahalo to Senator Keith-Agaran and Rep. Yamashita, as well as Senator Dela Cruz and Rep. Luke for their hard work on the construction budget. Getting these projects going will help stimulate our economy and also provide services for my constituents.

Here's a rundown:

- ◆ VA Long-Term Care Facility in Kapolei (construction) - \$30.1 million
- ◆ East Kapolei High School (plans, design, and construction for new school) - \$3 million
- ◆ Honouliuli Middle School – formerly East Kapolei Middle School (design and construction for Phase III) - \$46 million (total for both fiscal years)
- ◆ Kapolei High School (ADA improvements) - \$400,000
- ◆ Kapolei High School (classroom renovations) - \$6 million
- ◆ Farrington Highway Widening (Kapolei Golf Course to Fort Weaver Road) - \$100 million.
- ◆ Kapolei Parkway Safety Wall Improvements (intersection of Kapolei Parkway and Kama`aha Street) - \$50,000

Villages of Kapolei Road Work

I'm pleased to report that the state Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC) has begun the rehabilitation of key roads and sidewalks within the Villages of Kapolei community. The roads include Kealani Avenue, Kama`aha Avenue, Kama`aha Loop, and Kapolei Parkway. Road work will start in early September and be completed by February 2022. Road crews will work between the hours of 8:30am to 3pm, Monday through Friday. On-street parking will be prohibited in active construction areas. The contractor for this project is Grace Pacific, LLC. These improvements are part of the long-awaited process to transfer the ownership of the roads from HHFDC to the City.



On Jan. 30, 2020 Sen. Gabbard recognized Waipahu School Future Farmers of America (FFA) on the Senate Chamber floor. (L-R: Ken Kozuma, WIS Ag teacher and FFA Coordinator; Sean Valencia Monte; Mariah Quibol; Vheena Sistoza; Darren Estal; Jhanella Gerardo; Mariah Ramo and Jeff Garvey, WHS Natural Resources teacher.)



Senator Gabbard presented, along with Representatives Sharon Har and Ty Cullen, an Honorary Certificate to Principal Todd Fujimori during West Oahu's new Honouliuli Middle School dedication ceremony on August 3, 2020 .



Senator Gabbard presented an Honorary Certificate from the State Senate to Stacy Waiiau-Omori, Foodland Vice President of Sales and Operations, on July 13, 2020, to recognize the opening of Foodland Farms at the Grove at Ka Makana Ali'i in Kapolei.

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) Funding for Hawai'i

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) Funding for Hawai'i

During our legislative session from June 22 to July 10, we passed SB 126 to authorize the spending of \$648 million in federal CARES Act funding to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The UH Economic Research Organization estimates that this plan would generate \$1 billion for the state's GDP and support 6,500 jobs.

Here are a few highlights:

- ◆ **\$230 million – Department of Labor and Industrial Relations State Unemployment Insurance Weekly Benefit to Replace Federal Enhanced Benefits** This program started on August 1 and ends on December 31, 2020. It will assist 117,000 beneficiaries by providing them with \$100 per week in enhanced state unemployment benefits. Only current unemployment recipients are eligible, but not PUA recipients.
- ◆ **\$100 million – Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation Rental Assistance** This program will provide rental assistance for 50% of rent or \$500 per month. This will help 34,000+ beneficiaries. The rent relief payment period is for 5 months (August – December 2020)
- ◆ **\$100 million – Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency PPE Purchasing** This funding will assist child care & elderly care facilities, hospitals, small businesses, schools, and non-profits with PPE purchasing.
- ◆ **\$90 million – Department of Transportation Thermal Screening Purchases & Security Protocols** This funding will include a web-based traveler verification app, traveler verification rooms, swap & testing facility, and a service contract for testing.

Given the high unemployment and severe economic downturn we are facing because of COVID-19, I was very disappointed that Governor Ige made the following line item vetoes to SB 126 on July 30:

- ◆ Eliminated the \$230 million to provide an additional weekly unemployment benefit of \$100 per week.
- ◆ Reduced the \$100 million for housing and rental assistance and the administrative costs related to the housing relief and resiliency program to \$50 million.

- ◆ Reduced the \$100 million for the purchase of PPE to \$61 million.
- ◆ Reduced the \$36 million for retraining and workforce development programs to \$10 million.
- ◆ Reduced the \$15 million that would be used to support emerging industries to create a supply chain for cleaning supplies and PPE to \$10 million.

Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard Successful with House Passage of the Agriculture, Rural Development, and Food and Drug Administration Appropriations Bill

As the State Senate's Agriculture and Environment Committee Chair, I was very pleased that my daughter, Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, successfully included numerous Hawai'i-beneficial provisions in the House-passed Fiscal Year 2021 Agriculture, Rural Development, and Food and Drug Administration appropriations bill.

The wins included funding for the coffee and macadamia industries, tropical agriculture research, specialty crop production, floriculture research, integrated pest management/biocontrols, and more. Other wins include report language submitted by the Congresswoman, which accompany the funding bill and give more detailed guidance to departments and agencies to take specified action or refrain from taking a certain action.

On the national level, Congresswoman Gabbard continued her advocacy for Hawai'i beneficial USDA programs administered by the Rural Development, Farm Service Agency, Agriculture Research Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and Food and

Department of Education 'Ohana Help Desk Launched

The Department of Education launched the nation's first statewide, comprehensive help desk providing technology support to public school students and their parents on August 4.

The 'Ohana Help Desk provides self-service and chat support for families experiencing issues connecting to DOE systems remotely from home. (Cont. p. 4)

AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT BILLS THAT PASSED

Hemp Bill Passes!

HB 1819 (Hemp) - during our abbreviated legislative session (June 22-July 10), the committee chairs were given the opportunity to take up a few bills that didn't have a fiscal impact on the state. For years, I've been trying to get a commercial hemp program established... (ICYMI, Gov. Cayetano declared Dec.14, 1999 Hawai'i Industrial Hemp Day. Then, hempwise, government fell asleep, as it tends to do sometimes. Fifteen years later, from 2014-2018, I introduced 4 bills that became law, which included a UH hemp research study and setting up a pilot hemp research program.)

My top priority during this past session was to pass a revised version of House Bill 1819, which would allow farmers to apply to the U.S. Department of Agriculture directly to become licensed to grow, process, and sell hemp products. This would allow Hawai'i to create a new industry, create jobs, and diversify our economy that now relies too heavily on tourism.

I'm happy to announce that on August 27, Governor David Ige signed this bill into law! Hemp hemp hooray! Hemp is an incredible plant that produces over 25,000 products. Now we can begin to make the Hawaiian Hemp brand a reality, not only in the U.S. but globally as well. Given the devastating impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our economy, the signing of HB 1819 is a bright spot that has big potential for Hawai'i's agriculture. Soon, we'll have local farmers applying to the USDA for licenses to finally move forward with commercial hemp operations. It's been a long time coming... (Click to see [Press Release](#)).

HB 2486 (Statewide Sustainability Branch) - this bill would set up a Statewide Sustainability Branch within the Office of Planning to ensure stronger, long-term planning, coordination, and implementation of Hawaii's sustainability goals. The State Sustainability Coordinator who is now [Danielle Bass](#), would serve as the Administrator of the Branch.

HB 1854 (Little Fire Ant Control) - this bill requires the Department of Agriculture and the Hawai'i Ant Lab to come up with and post on its website best practices as it applies to the use of pesticides for Little Fire Ant control. It also clarifies that training for invasive species be based on best available technology and best practices.

SB 2060 (Coastal Zone Management) - this bill strengthens the state's coastal zone management policy and improves our overall resiliency to climate change. The bill identifies sea level rise as one of the coastal hazards that the state has to address. It improves the protection of beaches and beach ecosystems that are under threat from sea level rise; and prohibits shoreline erosion structures (hardening) on sandy beaches unless the granting of a variance is clearly in the public interest.

SB 2386 (Landfill Buffer Zones) - this bill prevents landfills from expanding if they are located within ½ mile from a residential, school, or hospital property line. It also prohibits new landfills within the ½ mile buffer zone and prohibits them from being located in a conservation district.

SB 2701 (Agriculture Building Investigations) – this bill that I authored was recommended by the Subdivision and Condominium Property Regimes on Agricultural Lands working group that was initiated by Act 245 (2019) under the Office of Planning. The idea is to prevent fake farms. The bill allows the appropriate agency, such as the county fire department and county permitting agency to enter the property upon reasonable notice to the owner or occupant, to investigate agricultural buildings for compliance with current law.



Senator Gabbard dons his hemp shirt while standing in a field of towering hemp plants in Waimanalo April 2018.

Department of Education 'Ohana Help Desk Launched *(Cont. from p. 3)*

The help desk assists with connectivity-related issues (e.g. network and wifi connectivity), access and security issues, device support (e.g. devices, applications, software updates) and general IT support. The DOE awarded a \$1.7 million contract to Hawaiian Telcom to establish the help desk.

The 'Ohana Help Desk is open to support students and parents:

- ◆ By phone at 643-DESK (3375) Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. and on Sundays from 4 to 8 p.m.
- ◆ Online 24/7 at ohanahelpdesk.org for self-service support and information.