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HEMA President

'24 LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

As follow-up to legislation that was approved through the 2024 Hawaii State Legislature and forwarded to Governor Josh Green for his approval or veto that largely focused on the Maui wildfire in addition to affordable housing and mental health, the following summarizes key updates to the legislation from HEMA's prior newsletter:

State Budget

On July 9, Governor Josh Green signed HB 1800 (Act 230, SLH 2024) and the supplemental budget act amending Act 164, SLH 2023, which appropriates \$19.1 billion across all means of financing, including more than \$10.3 billion in general funds for operating support for FY'25. In addition, \$4.5 billion is appropriated across all means of financing for capital improvement projects, including \$1.4 billion in general obligation bond funds for construction projects statewide.

In signing HB1800, Governor Green also imposed line-item budget reductions totaling \$74.2 million in general operating funds for FY'25. However, no cuts to social services were included in these line-item reductions.

Maui Wildfire

In addition to the ~\$1Bn appropriation approved for the Maui wildfire support initiatives and rebuilding, Governor Green signed legislation enabling the creation of the Office of the State Fire Marshal (Act 209, SLH 2024) to enhance fire safety and prevention across Hawai'i. Furthermore, this legislation enables the establishment of an Illegal Fireworks Task Force to improve public safety (Act 208, SLH 2024).



Hawaii State Legislature Building in Honolulu

Mental Health

To continue to address the challenges with serving Hawai'i's increasing homeless population that often are related to mental health issues, Governor Green also signed HB 2159 (Act 87, SLH 2024). This legislation amends Hawai'i's mental health statute to emphasize enhanced support for individuals needing assisted community treatment (ACT). These changes, which require the Department of the Attorney General to assist in preparing and filing petitions for ACT, are designed to facilitate access to mental health services. It is believed this will enable those within treatment to avoid the criminal justice system, while promoting a more compassionate and effective approach to mental health care in Hawai'i.

Renewable Energy

House Bill 2390 was passed that requires the Hawaii Public Utilities Commission to explicitly consider the effect of Hawai'i's reliance on fossil fuels on lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions and gives the commission the discretion to waive a lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions assessment for energy projects that do not involve combustion.

Several measures and resolutions were introduced during 2024 to establish and expand a tax credit to produce renewable diesel and sustainable aviation fuel. Although legislation wasn't adopted regarding these measures, the House and Senate have subsequently adopted resolutions requesting the Hawaii State Energy Office to convene a renewable liquid fuels working group to study local production, development and incentives for renewable liquid fuels.

2024 Primary Elections

The Primary Election on August 10, 2024 resulted in the defeat of Speaker Saiki, who has held a significant leadership position in the State House of Representatives since 2018. As a result, it is anticipated this may generate political dynamics in the Hawaii State Legislature, particularly the House of Representatives and its committees.

As a further outcome of this change in leadership in the House of Representatives, subject matters such as the redevelopment of Kaka'ako Makai, recreational marijuana, and gaming, which have previously been supported in the Senate but opposed in the House, may generate renewed and significant interest in the 2025 session.

Lahaina Wildfire Recovery



In addition to Hawai'i's ~\$1Bn appropriation for the Lahaina wildfire recovery and support services, FEMA along with federal partners are reportedly on track to provide an additional \$3Bn towards the wildfire recovery that shall support the expedited debris removal/disposal, school construction, infrastructure repair, and temporary housing. In addition, FEMA has established

Individual Assistance and Public Assistance programs to support community efforts that are focused on long-term recovery.

Maui County has reported the debris removal at 100% of the residential properties and 60% of the commercial properties destroyed by the wildfire. Furthermore, approximately 3,100 damaged or destroyed vehicles have been removed, while another 140 damaged or destroyed boats/vessels have been removed from Lahaina Harbor. The debris removal is projected to be complete in early 2025 and its total cost to approach \$1Bn.

The temporary housing solution of modular homes is underway, with one such community development of approximately 500 homes being completed on a hillside above Lahaina. This development will be completed in phases over approximately eight months, and Lahaina residents displaced by the wildfire began moving into these homes in August '24.

The residential building permit process has reportedly been streamlined to facilitate the delivery of building permits within approximately 15 days (from a prior estimated timeframe of 300 days). As of July '24, 31 disaster recovery permits for residential structures had been issued, with another 61 under current review.

HEMA 2nd Vice President

As HEMA currently has a vacancy for its 2nd Vice President Officer position, I will be nominating the replacement candidate for consideration at HEMA's fall board meeting.

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City of
Honolulu
Hawai'i

