



Bob Hood
HEMA President



'25 Legislative Session

The Hawai'i Senate Majority announced their legislative priorities in advance of the Hawai'i State Legislature's Opening Day. They committed to collaborate with the Senate Minority and the House of Representatives to forge a stronger and more resilient future for Hawaii. They further noted their focus is to deliver impactful policies that uplift Hawai'i's communities, fortify Hawai'i's economy, and protect Hawai'i's rich agricultural innovations and unparalleled natural resources. They summarized the following areas of focus for this year's legislative session:

Education and Workforce Development

- **Review initiatives** for improving public school infrastructure, advancing technology integration across campuses, aligning curriculum to workforce needs, supporting career and technical education, and boosting student test performance.
- **Focus** on the agriculture, construction, and healthcare industries, with proposals to consider a regional kitchen program, apprenticeships in public project development, and increased funding for nursing programs, respectively.
- **Consider proposals** to improve teacher and staff retention amongst other educational initiatives.

Housing, Homelessness, and Stabilizing Hawai'i's Property Insurance Market

- **Continue to address** the state's housing crisis by considering proposals that streamline housing approvals and provide funding for housing infrastructure across the islands, and focusing on advancing affordable housing initiatives.
- **Pursue efforts** to address homelessness by increasing support for mental health services, while expanding on-going initiatives to reduce homelessness.
- **Pursue the stabilization** of Hawai'i's property insurance market by providing homeowners with better access to hurricane and property insurance, and assisting condominium owners in exploring ways to address deferred maintenance and increasing costs of property insurance.

General Governance and Constitutional Rights

- **Continue the improvement** of processes by enhancing legislative efficiency, including revisiting laws governing legislative vacancies to streamline and strengthen the election process.
- **Encourage coordination** among nonprofits for grant distribution.
- **Address** business losses due to theft.
- **Reform** state biosecurity programs to better protect Hawai'i's unique ecosystems and agricultural industries from invasive species and pests.

HEMA continued

- **Improve** disaster preparedness and enhance planning efforts to increase resiliency – particularly for wildfires.
- **Pursue commitment** to safeguarding reproductive rights and legal immigration rights for all residents of Hawai'i.

Environmental Sustainability and Infrastructure

- **Continue to prioritize** improving environmental sustainability through the increased use of recycled water and improvements in water infrastructure, while also improving the Commission on Water Resource Management for greater efficiency.
- **Implement** transportation changes following legal settlements.
- **Support** climate resilient projects.
- **Promote** renewable energy transmission.
- **Continue evaluating** measures that address the issue of illegal fireworks, focusing on enhanced enforcement and preventive strategies to safeguard public safety.

Agricultural Innovation and other Revenue Streams

- **Continue to work** on strengthening processes focused on agricultural innovation, along with exploring alternative revenue streams for the state.
- **Consider measures** that aim to purchase agricultural land for development; and increase support for food innovation centers to enhance production capabilities.
- **Support the responsible** legalization of recreational marijuana, with a focus on addressing any impacts on Hawai'i's communities.

In addition, the House Majority Caucus, comprised of 42 House Democrats, summarized their 2025 legislative work by addressing the cost of living and improving the quality of life for Hawai'i's residents, with an emphasis on housing, homelessness, infrastructure, economic development, public safety, agriculture, and biosecurity. They outlined their legislative priorities as follows:

Housing

- **Increase affordable housing** options for low- and moderate-income families, including building more workforce housing.
- **Revisit residential** development requirements and continue oversight of the \$600 million allocated through Act 279 to deliver housing for native Hawaiians on the waitlist. Our goal is to ensure these funds are maximized to benefit as many native Hawaiian families as possible.

Homelessness

- **Pursue expansion** of access to mental health services, enhance crisis response efforts, and provide housing solutions for our most vulnerable populations.
- **Bolster investments** in kauhale and supportive housing.



Infrastructure

- **Pursue proactive solutions** to address deferred maintenance and explore how the state can better assist residents with necessary upgrades.

Economic Development

- **Facilitate quality job opportunities** in Hawai'i to retain local talent in Hawai'i and ensure economic opportunities for future generations.
- **Expand training** and internship programs to prepare students for public and private sector career paths.
- **Examine strategies** to recruit and retain public workers in the State of Hawai'i as we face workforce retirements and prepare for upcoming vacancies.
- **Ensure that working families** have access to affordable childcare, as it directly impacts the cost of living and the ability of parents to join and remain in the workforce.

Public Safety

- **Explore** a comprehensive approach to public safety, balancing investments in law enforcement with efforts to rehabilitate and support individuals.

Agriculture/Biosecurity

- **Pursue proactive measures** to strengthen the defense of our lands and shores, preserve our natural habitat, and ensure the well-being of our state.

As of the date of this newsletter, the Hawaii State Legislature is in its final stages with key legislation being debated in conference committees that consist of members from both the House and Senate. While many of the priorities identified above remain in consideration, the early failure of recreational marijuana to advance in the House, given the increase in members with a progressive agenda that were elected in 2024, was a surprise. Additionally, to offset the reduction of federal funds, other items that remain of interest are the possibility of legalizing on-line gaming (HB1308) as well as the effort to eliminate a number of tax credits (HB1369 HD1 SD1), both that are projected to increase State revenues for a number of the initiatives listed above.

HEMA identified at the commencement of this year's legislative session approximately sixteen bills which it considered priority, with many of these proposed bills being related to tobacco, family leave, fuel dispenser labeling, and the unemployment reserve fund. Furthermore, HEMA identified approximately eighty additional bills for on-going monitoring.

HEMA provided written testimony of opposition regarding the fuel dispenser labeling and family leave bills. Both bills did not progress through the legislative session and are no longer being considered. Furthermore, HEMA provided written testimony of opposition to the proposed increase in the unemployment reserve fund. As of the date of drafting this newsletter, this bill remains in consideration by the legislature, though is facing significant resistance.

Maui Wildfire

Maui County and State Officials continue their progress in support of Lahaina's residents impacted by the wildfire, in addition to their rebuild planning for Lahaina. Below is a summary of significant milestones:



- **All fire debris** has been cleared from commercial properties as of February 26, 2025, which was ahead of schedule. This is in addition to the prior completion of all fire debris removal from residential properties during '24.
- **Hawai'i's Supreme Court** ruled that a \$4Bn settlement for victims may move forward.

- **Transportation** and placement continue for the modular housing for the Ka La'i Ola development.
- **Residential** home rebuilding has begun, with six now reportedly fully completed.
- **Public utility services** continue to be restored, with sewer service now being active for an additional 183 properties in the Lahaina area. It is estimated that 98% of the city's sewer services have been restored in Lahaina.
- **Work commencing** to removing pilings along Front Street to commence in April, which will be an early step in the rebuilding of Front Street.

In addition, Mayor Bissen delivered his '25 State of the County Address on March 7 to hundreds of residents and community

leaders. He spoke of the County's path to healing, community-led and government-supported recovery milestones and initiatives, and the bolstering of emergency preparedness and response. He also summarized the priorities for '25 that include kama'aina housing initiatives and solutions to keep local residents in their communities, advancing recovery and well-being efforts, and protecting cultural and natural resources.

As follow-up to WPMA's and HEMA's financial contribution to the Maui United Way, below is a summary of certain support programs resulting from the donations received:

- **Allocated** over \$12.7MM to individuals and organizations across Maui County, with a focus on long-term resilience, providing resources for mental health, education and recovery, including but not limited to:
 - \$7.8MM in emergency financial assistance to nearly 8,000 residents
 - Funded forty-two nonprofit initiatives with grants totaling \$417K
 - Addressed food insecurity by dedicating \$1.2MM to programs ensuring access to nutritious, locally sourced meals.
- **Invested** \$1.5MM in the Lahaina Community Land Trust to help protect and preserve lands for future generations.
- **Provided** a program providing a one-time \$1,000 financial assistance payment to adult survivors in Lahaina and Kula, with a limit of \$5,000 per household.
- **Providing** \$240,000 in gift cards to wildfire survivors facing transportation challenges, while HEMA Member Company, Hawaii Petroleum contributed an additional 5% in gas cards.
- **211 Resource Helpline** available, providing direct referrals to over 4,000 social service resources available in the state.

Lastly, to further augment the Maui disaster recovery effort, Maui County will be expending \$1.6 billion in federal Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds. These CDBG-DR funds may be used to:

- **Replace damaged** affordable housing and build it back more resiliently.
- **Strengthen infrastructure** through repairs, upgrades, and activities to increase the resilience of public facilities and infrastructure including roadways, water systems, and utilities.
- **Support economic** revitalization including support for small businesses, creation of jobs, and assistance for residents.
- **Implement** disaster mitigation measures to reduce risk of damage from future extreme weather and disaster events.

HEMA March Board Meeting

1st Vice President

During HEMA's March '25 board meeting, Roger Dang was confirmed as our 1st Vice President, replacing Al Chee following his request to no longer serve on the HEMA board, given scheduling considerations. As previously communicated, Roger is a key Principal of Petro Pacific, which is a diversified and growing company providing fuel distribution and merchant fishing fleet operations in Hawai'i. Roger has been a long-standing Member of HEMA and we are certainly excited about his latest appointment to serve in this Executive position at HEMA.

HEMA New Director

During HEMA's February '25 board meeting, Sayble Bissen was confirmed as a new Director, replacing Paul Oliveira following his request to no longer serve on the HEMA board given scheduling considerations.

Sayble is Maui Oil Company's Chief Sales and Marketing Officer and has previously worked in leadership capacities within both the utilities and media industries. In addition, Sayble serves in leadership roles supporting Maui County communities, including; (i) Board Chair at Ka Ipu Kukui with its mission being to develop young leaders in Maui County; and (ii) Board Member at Habitat for Humanity Maui with its mission to build and renovate housing for those in need.

Event Highlights to Come



Hawaii Energy Marketers Association Oahu Country Club
150 Country Club Road, Honolulu - Hawaii 96817

Monday, May 5, 2025

**LOOK FOR
HEMA GOLF TOURNAMENT
HIGHLIGHTS**

in the
WPMA News SUMMER MAGAZINE!



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