

For Official Release
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Office of the Governor
Utulei, American Samoa
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“Governor Lemanu Hosts First Cabinet Meeting.”

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Note: Dealing with suspension and termination must be unlike regarding employment statuses for employees i.e career service, or temporary...”

On January 7th, 2022, the Lemanu-Talauega Administration held its first official cabinet meeting for 2022.

"On behalf of the Lieutenant Governor, and both our families, we want to express our sincerest appreciation for all the gratitude shown to us over the holiday season. Your show of affection and goodwill humbles us to be in such great company," stated Governor Lemanu in his opening remarks. He continued, "I also want to extend my sincerest gratitude to our friends in the private sector and businesses across the Territory. Faafetai, faafetai, faafetai tele lava."

Governor Lemanu reminded the cabinet members that the Administration's plans are set, and we must continue to provide the best service possible to the people of the Territory. He also asked that each cabinet member stays within their respective budget that has already been approved.

Department of Health

A presentation by Director Motusa Nua began with an update on the overall National average of populations affected by the Omicron variant. He warned that this variant is more transmissible than Delta and expects breakthrough cases. "These new variants are going to continue to manifest globally, and American Samoa will stay ready. ASDOH is committed to doing everything within our capabilities and resources to keep our Territory safe. However, it begins with vaccinations. Vaccinations will give our first responders a fighting chance at defending a surge or spread of any variant introduced here in American Samoa," stated Director Nua.

He continued to show that American Samoa has seen a significant jump improving our overall vaccination numbers from 66.8% in November to 74.4% in January. Also, the number of eligible

school children who received shots increased from 43% to 66.5% within this population. "We are still not at the 90% that the Governor is expecting, but I am hopeful we will be able to achieve this goal shortly," stated Director Nua.

He ended with a brief update on passengers that arrived from Hawaii on yesterday's flight. As a result of the first test, 25 positive cases and close contacts were removed from the flight. 28 positive cases and close contacts were removed from the flight following the second PCR test. After the third test, 22 positive cases and close contacts were removed from the flight. A total of 179 passengers arrived in American Samoa and are currently in quarantine.

Department of Human Resources

Director Lynn Aalaimalo clarified the process to file a vaccination exemption. The only reasons an exemption is approved are for a disability, medical reasons, or sincerely held religious belief, as stated in subparagraph VII of the Declaration. The following is the workflow for submitting a request for exemption.

- Request for exemptions must promptly be directed to the Department of Human Resources- signed written communication with a notarized form.
- Decision for any complicated exemption request should be made by the Director of DHR under the advice of the Legal Counsels or Attorney General:
- Medical/Disability Exemption Requests - DHR to verify Medical Provider's information and approval - Medical/Disability Exemption request is considered incomplete without Medical Provider's information and approval - Dr. Saleapaga of LBJ and Dr. Lauvao and other licensed professionals to approve these medical exemptions.
- Religious Exemption Requests - Legal Counsels (Department of Legal Affairs& Governor's Office) will review and provide recommendations for the DHR Director's decision on whether to grant reasonable accommodation, OR deny the request.
- DHR to ensure requests have all required information then sent to Legal Counsels Review. Turnaround time should be 3 days (maximum)
- Legal Counsel's review will determine the DHR Director's decision to deny or approve.

The result of not becoming vaccinated by January 14th, 2022, is stipulated below.

- Two (2) days from January 14th, 2022 (January 12th, 2022), DHR responsible agents must complete verifying departments/agencies reports. Departments/Agencies will be given a list of their employees who haven't had a shot, nor completed full vaccination; nor applied/requested an exemption with DHR (Reminder Notice - refer subparagraph VIII of the Declaration);
- **At 8 am on January 14th, 2022**, DHR Responsible Agents will filter and identify ALL employees who (1) have failed to provide proof full vaccination nor (2) applied for exemption/ granted an accommodation with DHR - List will be by departments on Employees; Full Names, employment status, etc.
- By the end of business **on January 14th, 2022**, letters from Director DHR with the List of Unvaccinated Employees attached will go out to departments/agencies to (1) inform of their

employee(s) listed and to (2) advise that employee(s) identified and listed need to comply with the following procedures:

- (1) Take leave (sick or annual) until they exhaust all (with pay or without pay based on their leave accumulation);
- (2) After they exhaust all leave and still no vaccination, suspension without pay will be in effect for thirty (30) days or however long decided by the Directors; and
- (3) When the suspension is over and there is still no vaccination, termination of employment will be in effect. Note: Dealing with suspension and termination must be unlike regarding employment statuses for employees i.e career service, or temporary, etc.

Office of Samoan Affairs

PC Mauga Asuega announced that Flag Day 2022 will begin as usual, bringing back some traditional festivities. Although the planning committee is still in its early stages, the overall consensus is to have Flag Day Festivities this year. The planning committee will be meeting Thursday, January 13th again, 2022, and more specifics and details will follow.

"We will have a fautasi race. We will have a cricket tournament. We will have a fishing tournament. We will have a farm fair. We will have an outrigger tournament. We will have singing and dancing. We will have an arts council program. All these things we are planning is to bring a sense of normalcy back to the Territory," stated PC Mauga. He continued, "The Governor has also reached out to our brothers and sisters in Samoa not only to wish them a happy new year but also to invite them to our Flag Day 2022 Celebration and our partnership with the United States. We look forward to working with them to help bring Madam Prime Minister and the Head of State to take part in our festivities."

The Honorable Talauega reminded the Cabinet that everyone has a crucial role in this year's roadmap. "We have set out what we want to accomplish last year. Let's make that happen this year. I also want to remind you that time is very critical. Make time to complete the important work. Plan accordingly and prioritize what you need to keep us moving forward," stated Lt. Governor. He continued, "These vaccination rates should be higher, and as we look at the reports from DHR, ASG employees make up some of the difference. Get your employees out there and get vaccinated."







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