



AMERICAN SAMOA  
GOVERNMENT

# TAPUITEA

Official Newsletter of the American Samoa Government



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JUNE 2025 | ISSUE 001

## Government In Action

- Governor and Lieutenant Governor Lead Unified Effort on Seabed Mining
- Critical Discussion on Food Safety and Agricultural Practices
- Governor Pula and Lieutenant Governor Pulu thank the U.S. Department of Education for Restoring Access to ARPA Education Funds
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation holds Employment Quality Employment Training
- American Samoa Celebrates the Class of 2025 Graduates



Pago Pago, American Samoa, June 2, 25-Celebrating community and collaboration: Governor Pulaali'i join local partners and members of the Nafanua foundation after a successful luncheon, hosted by the Pacific Center For Human Security, advancing their shared initiative.

## Port Administration Holds Christening Ceremony for New Tugboats

In a major step forward for American Samoa's maritime infrastructure, Governor Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula and First Lady Lois-Phillips Pula joined the Department of Port Administration (DPA) on May 28, 2025, to dedicate two new tugboats, Tava'e and Toloa. Held at the main wharf, the event drew a large audience of government leaders, DPA staff, and the community.



DPA Director Barney Sene opened the ceremony with gratitude to the local government and leadership, and paid tribute to the late former DPA Director Chris King, whose legacy was honored with a portrait unveiling and moment of silence. Governor Pulaali'i praised the occasion as a symbol of progress, honoring past leadership and celebrating the new vessels as pillars of future port safety and service. The Tava'e was christened by the late Mr. King's widow, while the Toloa was christened by the First Lady.

*"Today, we are not just dedicating vessels, we are honoring a legacy of perseverance, leadership, and devotion to the progress of our islands"*



Governor Pulaali'i personally welcomed the tugboat crews, and attendees witnessed a live demonstration showcasing the vessels' capabilities. The event marked a significant stride in enhancing port operations and reaffirmed the territory's dedication to maritime progress. Driven and united to safeguard and support the people of American Samoa.

## Governor Highlights Impact at The Nafanua Foundation Luncheon, Hosted by the Pacific Center for Human Security.

The Pacific Center for Human Security hosted a meaningful luncheon, bringing together community leaders, partners, and advocates to honor the strength and service of women. The event spotlighted discussions on mental health, cultural preservation, and the power of collective leadership. Governor Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula expressed heartfelt gratitude and praised the impact of women in leadership and service. First Lady Lois Phillips-Pula emphasized cultural preservation as vital to identity and empowerment.

Guided by Program Director Saolo Betham, the program featured insights from Katrina Helsham on the Center's mission and Gwendolyn Tuaitanu of the Nafanua Foundation, who acknowledged local partners and youth-driven outreach initiatives. Representatives from the Department of Health - Le Leo o Aiga, the Territorial Bank of American Samoa, and Tautua Samoa Mental Health Resource Center reaffirmed their partnership, further strengthening the shared mission.

A cultural performance by Nafanua Foundation fellows added depth to the gathering, which concluded with remarks from Tapumanaia Galu Satele, reinforcing the government's commitment to empowering communities and preserving values. The Pacific Center for Human Security continues its work in building an inclusive, culturally grounded society where all can thrive.

# Governor and Lieutenant Governor Spearhead Coordinated Initiative on Seabed Mining

On Friday, June 13, 2025, officials of the American Samoa Government convened to address critical matters concerning the territory. Among various agenda items, particular attention was given to the 30-day public comment period on BOEM's proposed commercial leasing for deep-sea mining within American Samoa's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

The meeting brought together Governor Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula, Lieutenant Governor Pulumataala Ae Ae Jr., Congresswoman Uifa'atali Aumua Amata, Senate President Tuaolo Manaia Fruean, and House Speaker Savali Talavou Ale.

## UNITED. SOLIDARITY. in Leadership

Following thorough deliberation, the leaders issued a unified statement opposing the proposed leasing activity, reflecting both the will of the people and a commitment to safeguarding the territory's natural marine resources. It was reaffirmed that the moratorium on seabed mining, established under Executive Order 006-24, remains active and legally binding.

The administration emphasizes its dedication to environmental stewardship, highlighting the importance of public trust and long-term sustainability in evaluating any prospective seabed initiatives. All attendees agreed that any future action must honor the interests and concerns of the people. Further updates on this issue will be shared as deliberations progress.

### For more information

#### Contact:

### American Samoa Resilience Office

 Paramount Building, Tafuna

 699-3636  [asrc@go.as.gov](mailto:asrc@go.as.gov)

## Key Leaders Facilitates Critical Dialogue on Food Safety and Agriculture practices

Governor Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula Leads Strategic Push for Food Safety and Agricultural Reform

With public concerns mounting over the safety and quality of locally produced food, Governor Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula has taken decisive action, convening a high-level, multi-agency meeting to address food safety and strengthen agricultural practices across American Samoa.

This collaborative initiative reflects the Governor's ongoing commitment to protecting public health, promoting sustainable agriculture, and ensuring that food, especially that consumed by school children, is grown, handled, and distributed under safe and sanitary conditions. Agencies also reported troubling discoveries such as food handlers operating without licenses, lack of restroom or handwashing facilities on farms, and harvested crops exposed to unsanitary conditions.

### Cross-Agency Collaboration

Agencies participating in this critical discussion included:

- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Health
- American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of Education's School Lunch Program
- Chief Procurement Office
- Office of the Attorney General

### Key Issues Raised

- Improper pesticide use and unsafe storage practices
- Contaminated farm environments and poor sanitation
- Insufficient oversight and absence of documented safety plans
- Unsafe conditions at foreign-operated farms and communication barriers due to language differences
- Limited capacity for pesticide residue testing on local produce.

## THE PATH FORWARD >>>

Governor Pula emphasized that food safety is not just a public health issue, it is a matter of territorial security. "This conversation is long overdue," he stated.

*"We must ensure that our people, especially our children, have access to food that is clean, healthy, and grown under safe conditions."*

In response, agencies outlined a set of action items, including:

- Coordinated joint-agency farm inspections
- Development of updated food safety regulations
- Investment in translator services to bridge communication gaps with farm operators
- Procurement of lab equipment for pesticide residue testing
- Legal reform to strengthen enforcement and accountability

## WHAT'S NEXT?

The Governor's Office will continue to provide regular updates as action plans are implemented. Agencies have pledged to maintain transparency and cooperation to restore public confidence in local agriculture and ensure that all food reaching the community meets the highest health and safety standards.



## Empowering Career Growth through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation's Quality Employment Training

In a collective push toward inclusion and opportunity, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), led by Director Adrian Vasai, launched the second phase of its capacity-building training series for its Counselor Core. This initiative focuses on equipping counselors with the tools and knowledge to support individuals with disabilities in securing meaningful employment, particularly amid growing job market competition. At its heart, this effort reaffirms OVR's mission to elevate every member of the community, regardless of ability, by promoting skills development, career readiness, and equal access.

Thanks to a valued partnership with the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment, industry experts Dr. Timothy Tansey and Dr. Michael Frain led the training sessions held June 9–10.

The program was offered at no cost to OVR and highlighted effective strategies for counselor-led employment planning and youth transitions. Community business owners and government leaders also attended, engaging in open dialogue about how to champion inclusive hiring practices and build pathways to opportunity together.

This initiative highlights the spirit of unity that defines American Samoa. The involvement of local businesses and government agencies demonstrates a growing commitment across sectors to lift barriers and build bridges. By engaging employers, empowering youth, and fostering collaboration, OVR's training represents more than professional development, it's a promise to build a future where no one is left behind. As this momentum continues, American Samoa is paving the way for a more inclusive and empowered workforce.

## Strengthening Workforce Readiness



For more information  
Contact:

Office of Vocational  
Rehabilitation  
Industrial Park Road  
Telephone: (684) 699-1371



## In recognition of the U.S. Department of Education's decision to restore access to ARPA Education Funds, Governor Pula and Lieutenant Governor Pulu have conveyed their deep thanks on behalf of the people of American Samoa.



Governor Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula and Lieutenant Governor Pulumataala Ae Ae Jr. extend their sincere appreciation to the U.S. Department of Education for reinstating access to American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) education funds. This decision allows the American Samoa Government to resume submitting eligible funding requests under the original process, supporting continued investment in students, schools, and COVID-19 recovery efforts.

The Department has also granted a 14-month extension, through March 2026, under 2 CFR § 200.344(c), to permit the liquidation of properly obligated ARPA funds, providing additional time to complete payments for approved initiatives.

The government remains committed to working collaboratively with the Department to ensure these resources are responsibly utilized to advance educational outcomes across the Territory. Gratitude is extended to the American Samoa Department of Education, the local ARPA office, Office of Procurement, Attorney General's Office, and all other agencies that contributed to this positive outcome. Updates will continue as implementation progresses.

For further information,  
kindly Contact:

**ASDOE Main Office**  
(684) 633-5237

**ARPA Oversight Office**  
(684) 633-5237



**American Samoa  
Department of Education**



**American Rescue Plan  
Act Oversight Office, AS**



# American Samoa Celebrates the Class of 2025 Graduates

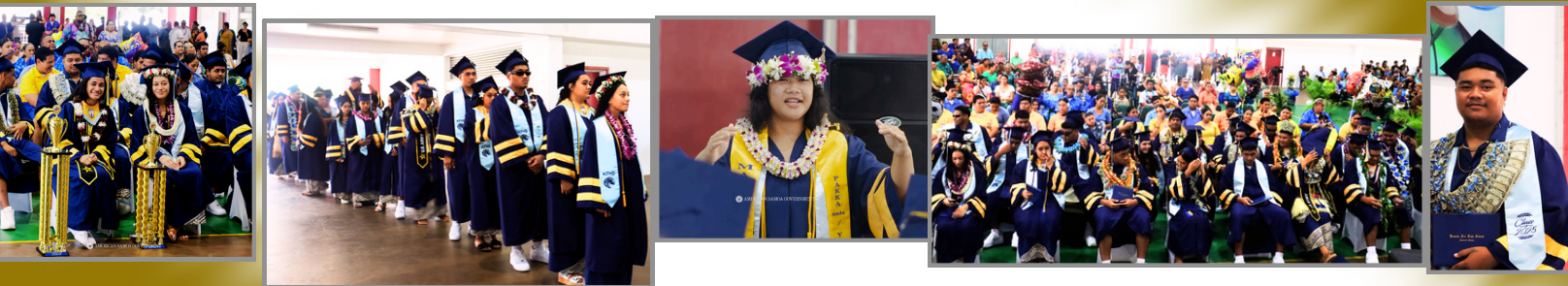
## *Manumalo Baptist Academy*



## *Iakina Adventist Academy*



## *Kanana Fou High School*



## *Fa'asao Marist High School*



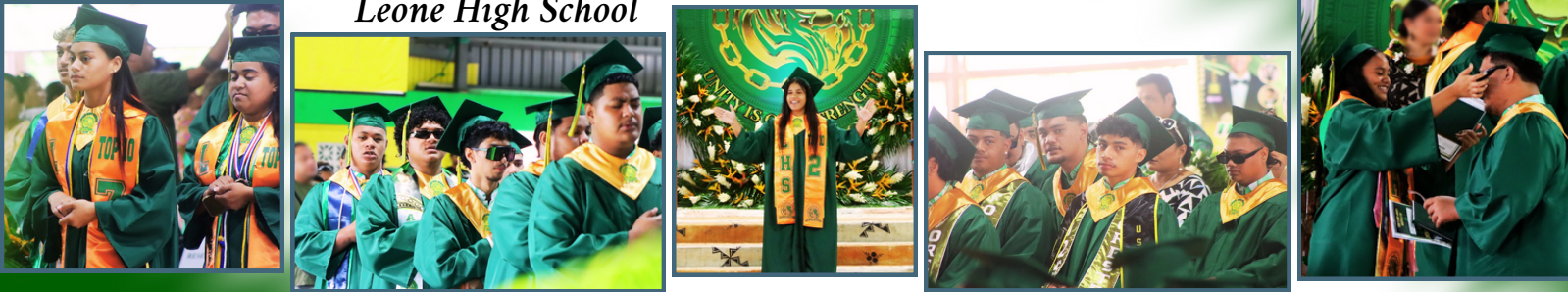
## *Manu'a High School*





# American Samoa Celebrates the Class of 2025 Graduates

## Leone High School



## Tafuna High School



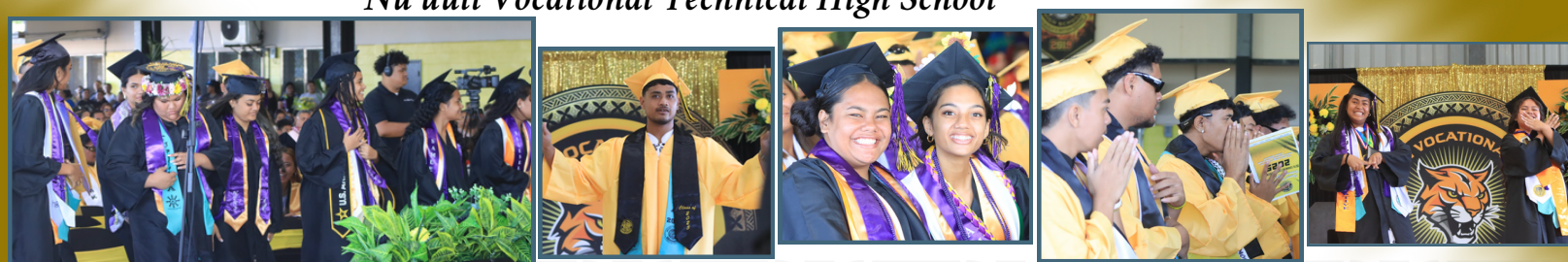
## Fagaitua High School



## Samoana High School



## Nu'uuli Vocational Technical High School





# COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

*Equal Employment Opportunity Office Compliance Training*



*Manu'a School Site Visit*



*Lt. Governor Pulumataala Meets Linguist & Educator, Dr. Keao NeSmith*



*Summer Youth Program 2025 Opening Ceremony*



*American Samoa Council on Arts, Culture & Humanities Children Arts Summer Program*



*Department of Health Acquire the Ottoville Professional Building in Tafuna*



*Annual Senior Citizens Day Celebration*



*Samoan Independence Special Church Service*



*Athletes Ahead of 2025 Pacific Mini Games in Palau*



*Crafting Success Workshop hosted by ASVB in collaboration with TAOA*



*Team American Samoa U15 Women's Softball at the WBSC World Cup in Italy*



*Miss American Samoa Incorporated 31st Annual Pageant Crowns a New Ambassador*





## UPCOMING EVENTS:


- POLYNESIAN BOWL FOOTBALL CAMP
- AUNU'U COMMUNITY HEALTH CLINIC  
GROUNDBREAKING
- JULY 4<sup>TH</sup> FESTIVITIES  
Hosted by the Office of Veterans & Military Affairs
- MANU'A FLAG DAY FESTIVITIES

Should you wish to have any forthcoming events considered for inclusion in our newsletter, please contact us.



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