



Hawaii State Director Michael Iosua reports on the 2025 session of the State Legislature

The 2025 Legislative Session of the State of Hawai'i convened on January 15th and adjourned *sine die* on May 2nd. Over the course of the session, 3,172 bills were introduced, with 322 measures passing both chambers and transmitted to Governor Josh Green for final approval.

This year's Legislature saw significant turnover, with nine new members joining the House of Representatives and one new member joining the Senate. After the last election, 27 of the 51 House members are serving in their first or second term—making this one of the youngest legislative bodies in Hawai'i's history in terms of years of service. On a somber note, longtime Republican Representative Gene Ward passed away during the session; a replacement has yet to be named.

The House of Representatives also underwent substantial leadership changes. Representative Nadine Nakamura was selected as the first female Speaker of the House in Hawaii state history, with Linda Ichiyama named Vice Speaker and Sean Quinlan serving as Majority Leader. Several new committee chairs and vice chairs were appointed as well. Following adjournment, another major change occurred in House leadership.

Representative Kyle Yamashita resigned as Chair of the House Finance Committee (FIN), and Representative Chris Todd was appointed as his successor. Given the FIN committee's pivotal role in drafting the state budget and overseeing all fiscal legislation introduced in the House, this change may result in a significant shift in the policy direction the House majority takes for future sessions. Additional changes to committee chairmanships may follow in the coming weeks.

Much of the 2025 legislative session was defined by the State's ongoing response to the Maui wildfires. Lawmakers focused on several critical areas, including insurance market stabilization, securitization and liability protections for Hawaiian Electric Company—the state's sole electric utility—and long-term housing recovery.

Fiscal concerns also played a prominent role this session, driven largely by significant uncertainty at the federal level. Hawai'i is projected to lose approximately \$450 million in federal funding, threatening the viability of nonprofit organizations and essential service programs statewide. This anticipated shortfall influenced the Legislature's approach to both budget and policy decisions, prompting heightened scrutiny of fiscal measures.

Beyond wildfire recovery and fiscal stabilization, the Legislature also took up several high-profile and controversial issues. These included proposals to legalize recreational marijuana, provide hazard pay to state workers who reported to work in-person during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a sports wagering bill, which for the first time in Hawai'i advanced further than ever before, making it through multiple committees and into conference.

As 2025 is the first year of the biennium, any bills that failed to advance through the legislature can be resurrected next year at the same point of the process in which they failed or may be reintroduced next session for further consideration.

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