



June
2020

PARLIAMENTARY SITTING SUMMARY

DISCLAIMER

This Report provides a brief of the Proceedings of Parliament on Tuesday 16th June 2020. While all efforts have been made to provide an informative brief, this information must not be relied upon as an alternative to the official Hansard record of proceedings of Parliament. If you have any specific questions about the Proceedings of Parliament on Tuesday 16th June 2020, you should consult the official Hansard or seek assistance from the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday 16th June 2020

9:06am

I. NOTICE FROM THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 76, Mr Speaker read out a Notice from the Leader of the House to introduce the following Bill:

- i. *Miscellaneous (Salary Conditions Upon Suspension) Amendment Bill 2020*

II. OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS BY MR SPEAKER

The Hon Speaker read out the amendment on the Orders provided in the State of Emergency Covid-19

III. PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORTS TABLED

A total of 6 Committee Reports were tabled; 3 from the Standing Orders, Electoral, Petitions and Constitutional Offices Committee; 2 reports from the Finance and Expenditure Committee; and 1 Report from the Economic Sector Committee.

IV. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY – Reading of Bills

1. **SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL No.3 2020; and APPROPRIATION BILL 2020/2021** – debate on second reading pursuant to S.O 132

I. TOLEAFOA Vaafusuaga Ken Poutoa, Member for Lefaga and Faleseela

The Member acknowledged Mr Speaker and Samoa in all her honorific salutations; acknowledged the 3 arms of Government (Parliament, Judiciary and the Executive). He then commended the Hon Minister of Finance with the preparation of the Budget in such unprecedented times hence the introduction of three Supplementary Appropriations to mitigate the financial impacts of COVID-19 on families and businesses. The Member

suggested an extra appropriation for the Ministry of Police, citing the importance of their role in ensuring the safety of the Public. Afioga Toleafoa noted the importance of 'beautification committee's' in promoting the cleanliness of villages. Furthermore the Member sought more funding for the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in promoting farming and fishing (subsistence living) to combat the impacts of COVID-19 on families. He acknowledged the appropriation of 35million set aside to fund assistance for contributors of the National Provident Fund and queried the percentage afforded to all contributors. He then expressed appreciation for the increase of \$160 monthly pension for the elderly. Afioga Toleafoa also addressed the Minister and Commissioner of Police on the successful merge of the Prisons and Police and requested appropriate salary scales for police officers and prison wardens to justify the nature of their work (as law enforcers and upholding peace and safety for the nation). Furthermore, the Member also requested to appropriately arm wardens for protection purposes and the installation of a warning siren to immediately alert neighbouring villages when a breakout occurs. Additionally the Member also voiced the need for capacity building to up-skill and train all those stationed at the new prison (to avoid occurrence of the mass prison break). Toleafoa then addressed his constituency and acknowledged their support and assistance to the Police force in capturing escapees.

In regards to the three (3) Bills before the Special Committee; (Constitution Amendment 2020; Land and Titles Bill 2020; and Judicature Bill 2020), the Member noted his full support and appreciation for the merits of the Bills. He then recommended having one (1) member from each constituency to be a Judge for the Land and Titles Court.

He then acknowledged the Minister of Health and the Ministry on the decentralisation of Medical Officers for district hospitals. He noted that there were requests in 2016 for a District Hospital in his constituency and citing that there is about 3,000 constituents, which this Hospital will cater for it is established.

Toleafoa acknowledged the services provided by Samoa Airways, and the new aircraft purchased to improve air services for Samoa and also stressed on the importance of providing local employment opportunities for our youths (as opposed to employing foreigners). He then suggested the importance of having 2 airplanes to serve the country. The Member also mentioned an appropriation of 5million for the Minister of Works, Transport and Infrastructure and expressed gratitude for the completion of road works in his constituency (upgrading the roads for Faleseela and Falelatai).

In regards to the Ministry of Education, the member acknowledged the proactive approach of the Ministry in closing schools to ensure the safety of students. The Member then requested the accreditation of APTC degree's overseas.

The Member acknowledged efforts by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology in establishing the Tui Cable, which has provided affordable and fast internet services, for the public and schools.

INTERJECTION- PRIME MINISTER

The Hon Prime Minister spoke on the accreditation process as mentioned by the Member and refuted claims made by the Member that the Degrees hold no leverage overseas as there are different systems in place overseas, and have nothing to do with accreditation.

TOLEAFOA Vaafusuaga Ken Poutoa, Member for Lefaga and Faleseela (cont.)

The Member acknowledged with appreciation the efforts of the NEOC Committee tasked with the overall safety of the nation from COVID-19 and suggested the continuity of closing businesses and operations on Sundays. Concluding his remarks by addressing his constituency and iterating the importance of 3 Bills before the Special Committee, signifying the customs of our people and valuing communal rights of Alii ma Faipule rather than undermining individual rights as noted by concerns made by certain individuals.

II. LAAULIALEMALIEAO Polataivao Fosi- Member for Gagaifomauga No.3

The Member acknowledged his Constituency, 3 Arms of Government, and Samoa in all her honorific salutations. He then beseeched forgiveness of the House, especially the Speaker for past wrongs; he also conveyed apologies to the Executive and Parliament. He commended the Minister of Finance and requested that the Minister be proactive in formulating the next course of action to continue to avert the constraints of Covid19.

The Member then addressed the Minister for Communication and Information Technology and commended efforts in establishing the gateway, however noting certain concerns as to the opened gateway to other foreign companies, noting that the Samoan Government is a shareholder of Bluesky, which was sold to Vodafone for 86million USD.

MINISTER for MCIT- Hon AFAMASAG Lepuiai Rico Tupai (Point of Clarification)

The Hon Minister rejected claims made in regards to the Gateway and noted that the two companies are continuing with negotiations on the decisions made pertaining to the Gateway. The Tui Samoa cable is independent and it does not operate within the Fiji jurisdiction, therefore information and connection is secure.

LAAULI Polataivao Fosi- Member for Gagaifomauga No.3 (cont.)

The Member queried the 86million selling price for Bluesky to Vodafone and reminded the House of the concerns he earlier raised with Boom Vodka produced in Samoa and the ingredients used in the production of such liquor – he noted that the sale of ‘boom vodka and oioli’ liquor has proven detrimental to individuals who consume these drinks. The severity of the alcohol beverage is that individuals blackout and loose themselves when intoxicated and therefore causing harm to not only themselves but those nearby (families/friends). The Member implied that the Chinese Owned Whiskey pose detrimental health effects for the Public. Noted that the implied alcohol percentage on the whiskey’s labels are far lower than the actual percentage. He then called for the permanent closure of these alcohol companies.

INTERJECTION- PRIME MINISTER

In regards to issue on the liquor Companies raised by the Member, the Hon PM noted that the Ministry has examined these concerns closely. The PM responded that investigations have been implemented and vindicated the alcohol percentage displayed is indeed that inside the bottle. He then noted the issues which arise from intermarriages (noting loopholes in the legislation) whereby the local spouse is used to attain a business license).

Tialavea Tionosio Seigafolava Hunt - Minister for Customs and Revenue

The Hon Minister clarified that the alcohol in question is in fact classified under the wine category and not a beer. He further noted that to date, production has halted while investigations commence. Furthermore, the Liquor Board is currently examining the issue, and the Company has been indicted and punished while the Ministry awaits findings from the SROS (as to the ingredients of the alcohol beverage).

LAAULIALEMALIE TOA Polataivao Fosi- Member for Gagaifomauga No.3 (Cont.)

The Member asserted that he is not stating fabricated claims and posed the rhetoric on the economic benefits reaped by the Chinese while local produce such as kava is being stopped. The Member then addressed the Minister and Ministry of Health in taking proactive measures to ensure covid19 does not enter our nation; then raised the need for allowance to be paid for our frontline defence (health providers).

INTERJECTION – PRIME MINISTER

The Hon PM asserted that the issue of allowance for health providers is on Government’s agenda and explained that the NEOC is considering the pros and cons of having individual self-isolate/quarantine at the comfort of their own homes. He further stated that Cabinet is treading with the utmost caution when dealing with matters of COVID-19.

LAAULIALEMALIETOA Polataivao Fosi- Member for Gagaifomauga No.3 (Cont.)

The Member concluded his remarks by urging the Members of the Special Committee tasked with the consideration of the 3 Bills to remain neutral during considerations to be opened to hearing both sides of the coin.

III. FAALOGO Iosefa Sopi – Member for Siumu

The Member noted the restrictions being lifted and commended efforts made by the NEOC in advising Government on the best interest of the country. In regards to the Budget, the Member asserted his usual comments for most budget is “if only, we had more money”. He then addressed his constituency and assured them that all requests have been made to respective Ministers for the developments needed in the constituency.

The Member made specific mention of access roads needing upgrade at the coconut beach resort and for proper drainage and clean water supply for certain parts of his constituency. Afioga Faalogo, acknowledged the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries for the Buoys which marks safe areas of fishing for the fishermen and requested for more buoys. He then addressed the Minister of Health and commended her and the Ministry on their efforts to ensure Samoa is COVID free. He acknowledged the awareness and precautionary measures to take advertised on different media outlets to raise the knowledge of people on the symptoms and preventative measures for COVID19. The Member then requested the Minister of Health for appropriate resourcing of the existing Health Centre for his constituents as there needs to be renovations and equipment to provide basic health checks.

In regards to the Ministry for Customs and Revenue on the issue of Skyline products, regardless of whether the wine is produced by rice, the Member strongly recommends the termination and cease of operations. (The Member noted that the fermentation is questionable as the fermentation process usually takes up several months, yet the skyline states that this process takes about 3 days).

TIALAVEA Tioniosio Seigafolava Hunt - Minister for Customs and Revenue

The Hon Minister commented on the process of fermentation and stated that the colouring is added post-fermentation and in accordance with standards set by the Liquor Board. Furthermore, the Ministry has advised to utilise glass as opposed to plastic as is the current process.

INTERJECTION – Hon. Prime Minister

The Hon PM mentioned that there is a Japanese wine produced from fermentation of rice and this was a popular export of Japan; he then noted the potential to export local Samoan wine.

FAALOGO Iosefa Sopi – Member for Siumu

The Member concluded his statements by acknowledging efforts of the Samoa Bureau of Statistics in administration of National ID; and commended Samoa Airways for the new airplane and queried whether it was appropriate to continue flights during COVID19.

**Proceedings were set aside at 10:55am;
and reconvened at 11:42am**

IV. FAUMUINA WAYNE FONG- MEMBER FOR URBAN WEST

The Member acknowledged Parliament and requested again to the Minister of Works for the development works needed at the roads of Falelauniu.

INTERJECTION by the Minister of Works – Hon PAPALIITELE Niko Lee Hang

The Minister stated that, the work projected for Falelauniu will be in progress soon as it is on the agenda for the final Financial Year.

HON PRIME MINISTER - CLARIFICATION

Hon PM noted that this matter was before Cabinet and the Minister for Commerce, Industry and Labour Lautafi was pushing for the repair works as he resides in this area.

FAUMUINA Wayne Fong, Member for Urban West (cont.)

The Member noted the fire which demolished the Office of the Regulator and called for another building to house the Office soon to ensure the execution of its operations is not affected. In regards to the Minister of Justice Courts and Administration, the Member commended the Minister for being patient with the process of the 3 controversial Bills currently with the Special Committee. The Member also stated that there are still uncertainties posed in the Bills which continue to be worrisome to some of the public, and therefore suggesting an informative and understandable awareness to be conducted to clarify issues and concerns raised by the public.

The Member acknowledged the Minister of Education and noted that they were at the tail end of this Parliamentary Term and acknowledged his works. In regards to the erection of the school at Vaigaga, the member queried whether there be a cheaper contractor to alleviate costs. Acknowledged Minister for the upgrading of school buildings.

Commended efforts made by the Minister and Ministry of Customs and Revenue on the collection of revenue for the nation despite there being a reduced amount due to the global pandemic. The Member expressed empathy for the Minister during the Covid19 era; he acknowledged her resolve in dealing with the issues which came about during her tenure. Attributed this to the Minister and her motherly instincts. Called for an approval of his referral for overseas treatments. In regards to the Minister for Agriculture, the Member called to place emphasis on

Taro, Coconut and cocoa as these have high export potential to overseas markets. Also suggested a programme that can encourage the local farmers to improve the development of cocoa, coconut and taro plantations. The Member addressed the Minister for Works Transport and acknowledged for noting the concerns raised by the Member.

The Member reminded the Minister for Women, Community and Social Development of the Policies by the Village Fono 'Taiala mo le Malo' and urged for awareness programs to be conducted to better inform Village Councils of the importance of their role. He then commended other awareness programs such as the personal hygiene advertisement on TV and others.

V. LEAANA Ronnie Posini- MEMBER FOR SAFATA

The Member acknowledged 3 arms of government and Samoa in all her honorific salutations. He then acknowledged the leadership of the Prime Minister and Government to ensure Samoa was COVID free; noting the detrimental and devastating impacts of COVID-19 on other countries. Therefore commending the Executive in the proactive manner of which has become the theme of their operations during the outbreak.

He addressed the Minister of Finance and acknowledged his efforts in keeping Samoa afloat despite the collapse of economies around the world; Samoa still has money to spare which is reflective of excellent financial management.

He then commended the Minister of Health for providing great service during times of COVID-19 and the state of emergency for Samoa. Commended the nurses and doctors for all their sacrifices and great service during this time, as well as providing safety and health measures for all of Samoa.

He addressed the Minister of Education and noted the high level of performance for the Ministry. Then requested that the Minister look at incorporating technical skills in High Schools. Stated that there are varying degrees of talents; others are blessed with intellect in terms of writing, etc, others are more technical. Called for scholarships for Technical Expertise (Plumbing, Engineering) etc. expressed that there needs to be a balance in emphasis between intellectual and technical skills.

In regards to the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, the Member stated the issue of sea level rise, therefore needing Seawalls to provide protection not only for the constituency but for the land crops and agricultural crops within the constituency. He then reminded the Minister if it could be fixed as per letter they have already submitted.

The Member again requested to the Minister for Works, Transport and Infrastructure that there are some villages which are large in area and in need of access roads for ease of transportation to and from plantations and farms specifically for the village of Saanapu.

The Member commended efforts of the Minister of Agriculture as during the lockdown there has been more individuals farming the lands to assist families.

The Member addressed the Ministry of Police and raised the need to effectively monitor vehicles during yearly registrations to ensure extra accessories to vehicles which affect the safety of the travelling public on the roads to ensure these accessories (such as neon lights, etc) be removed

to ensure the overall safety of the people as these accessories can cause accidents. He further asked to be more vigilant with the monitoring of speed limits on the roads.

The Member acknowledged his constituency with assisting in capturing the escaped convicts and asserted the need for better locks utilised at the new prison. He then requested for a Fire Emergency Services outpost in his constituency and cited the rise of developments as justification of this. Furthermore, the Member commended the Commissioner of Police in apprehending the individuals whom are indicted for drugs.

VI. FAAULUSAU Rosa Duffy Stowers- Member for Gagaifomauga No.3

The Member made general comments on the following Ministries:

- Ministry of Communication and Information Technology – noted that the internet was expensive but connection gets slow
- Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture - look at establishing a fund for Teachers who teach in mission Schools to assist with the payment of their salaries and keep them employed at this crucial time
- Ministry of Customs and Revenue - commended the Minister for the State of the Art new system, which looks to stem tax evasion. Furthermore emphasized the proper and stringent monitoring of borders to ensure the stem influx of drugs
- Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour - commended the initiative, which closes the Major Supermarkets at 7pm and allows small retail shops ONLY to operate. called for monitoring on the weighing systems (sugar, flour etc) whether it is accurate)
- EPC and SWA – The Member commended services provided for the whole of Samoa. Raised the need to justify the increase of water and electricity charges rather than increasing these essential services while the quality remains the same.
- Ministry of Police - The Member called the Ministry to properly assess the transportation in Savaii, noting there were vehicles with very loud car horns which are hazardous on the road.
- The University of the South Pacific should accredit and recognise the validity of NUS degrees. The Member queried the responsible Minister tasked with regulation of fees for Law Society and the Institute of Accountants registration fees to be made more affordable.

VII. ALAIASA Moefaauouo Sepulona Moananu – Member for ANOAMAA East

The Member spoke on the importance of a nation founded on God; and to put God first in all national goals to ensure the smooth sailing and progress of its developments.

**Proceedings adjourned at 1 pm;
and will reconvene on Wednesday 17 June 2020 at 9am.**