

DISCLAIMER

This Report provides a brief of the Proceedings of Parliament on Tuesday 7th April 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 7th April 2020, you should consult the official Hansard or seek assistance from the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday 7th April 2020

9:02am

I. MESSAGE FROM O LE AO O LE MALO

Mr Speaker read out a Message from Le Ao o le Malo that Pursuant to F.K.20(13) regarding the Covid-19 and in response to the threat on the right to life, His Highness TUIMALEALIIFANO Vaaletoa Sualauvi II permits the extension of the State of Emergency (SoE) from April 5-2 May 2020.

Pursuant to Article 59 of the Constitution of the Independent State of Samoa, 1960 (“the Constitution”), the Ao o le Malo endorses the Assembly to deliberate on the following Bill:

- Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.2) 2019/2020

II. NOTICE FROM THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Pursuant to S.O 100(2) the following Bill is introduced under COU:

- Prisons and Corrections Amendment Bill 2020.

Ministerial Statement and Tabling the Order of State of Emergency (SOE) – Hon Prime Minister

The Hon Prime Minister acknowledged the 3 arms of Government and Samoa in all her honorific salutations. He then acknowledged the forbearance and determination of the Samoan people in heeding Governments SOE directives in response to the global crisis caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Pursuant to Articles 105 and 106 of the Constitution; the SOE commenced 28 March and will be extended to 4 weeks commencing 5 April 2020.

The Hon Prime Minister mentioned the following directives issued during the first SOE:

1. Fasting and prayer (6am-12pm) 22 March - 29 March;
2. Conditions for travelling (Ships and Aircraft);
3. Conditions for public gatherings;

4. Cease operation for all buses and public transportation;
5. Markets and Supermarkets to adhere to new business curfew times;
6. Prohibit roadside vendors;
7. All Schools to be temporarily closed;
8. Hospitals (conditions on sick carers);
9. Government working hours;
10. Duties pertaining to Health Workers;
11. Duties pertaining to the Ministry of Police;
12. The Authority granted to CEO's and General Mangers during SOE;
13. Penalty notice;
14. Penalties (whoever breaches the orders of the SOE);
15. Advisory Committee in accordance with Article 108 of the Constitution;
16. Parliament has full jurisdiction to continue the execution of their law making roles during the SOE; and
17. Funding of Government during the SOE.
(The Government will be funded by the Budget that was approved 2019/2020 together with the Supplementary Budget No.1 (approved in January 2020) and the Supplementary Appropriation No.2 that is being tabled today.)

Hon PM reiterated that the rationale for today's Supplementary Budget is to introduce a stimulus package in response to the financial crunch caused by the Pandemic. He affirmed that Parliament is in compliance with Articles 106 and 107 of the Constitution. He then reiterated the extension of the SOE for the safety of the nation; and then commended the work of all Health service providers (Government Officials, Clergy) during these times of anxiety and uncertainty.

The Hon PM then moved a motion for the extension of the SOE (to a further 28 days commencing on the 5 April 2020) to be tabled before Parliament as required by the Constitution. Motion seconded and approved.

MOTION

Hon FIAME Naomi Mataafa - Deputy Prime Minister

The Hon Deputy PM moved the motion to table the Ministerial Statement by the Hon Prime Minister;

Motion seconded and approved.

III. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY- READING OF BILLS

1. Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.2) 2019/2020 - first reading

Hon Minister of Finance, SILI Epa Tuioti moved a motion for the Bill to be first read; Motion seconded and approved.

***Second Supplementary Estimates 2019/2020 - tabled**

2. Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.2) 2019/2020- second reading

Hon SILI Epa Tuioti Minister of Finance moved a motion for the Bill to be second read and elaborated on the specifics of the Bill.

Hon SILI Epa Tuioti - Minister of Finance

The Hon Minister stated that the first Supplementary budget was tabled in the recent Parliamentary sitting (January 2020) and this was in response to the measles outbreak at the time. He stated that we live in unprecedented times and likened it to the age of the Second World War. Hon SILI stated that Financial Projections of growth of 3.3% has now dropped to 2.4% if the current trend remains. This is due to factories being closed down resulting in workers being laid-off. He stated that Government anticipated the economy growth to increase by 3.7% due to the number of conferences hosted by Samoa, as well as the increase of tourists however this cannot be foreseen due to the effects of Covid-19.

The Hon Minister stated that the effects of the Pandemic have been detrimental to Samoa's Tourism industry and as a result Samoa's economy will drop to -2.2%. He continued his address and stated that the pandemic is known globally as a 'social and economic tsunami' with its impacts affecting sources of income of most countries (especially affected and related countries)

The Hon Minister stated that it is imperative that Government and Parliament (as a whole) take charge in formulating a contingency plan in response to the current calamity (Financial Collapse). The Minister noted that Samoa's economy is a small one and it is important to budget wisely. The Supplementary Budget has been formulated swiftly so as to alleviate the effects of the Financial Crunch on the nation. Hon SILI asserted that this situation has taken longer than anyone has anticipated and therefore need all the support and preparedness to counter the Covid-19.

The Minister stated that the Budget timeframe is for 3-6 months and then stated that the Supplementary Budget No.2 prioritises the following areas:

- The Ministry of Health as our frontline defence in combating this pandemic;
- Public relief;
- Agriculture and Fisheries;
- Relief for Private Sector; and
- Relief for Multi-Sectorial Response.

A total of \$66.3 million will be spent in supporting these areas in the form of government assistance.

20.3million will be allocated to the Health Sector for prevention. The Construction of negative pressure rooms to house those suspected of contracting the virus (targeting the population who have a travel history to nations with the virus)

12.5million Enabling the Private Sector
Subsidize Local Production - (1.4 million)

- Guarantee for small businesses (\$355k x 3months) - (1.1 million)
 Code 121 - (.3 million)
 SNPF 6 months' moratorium
 Tourism (2.6million Tala)
 ACC Moratorium (months Tourism + 2months others) - (1 million)
 - 2 months Free Rent at SNPF Facilities - (604,000)
 - 2 months Free Rent at ACC Facilities - (500,000)
 - Waiver on Bus/Taxi Registration Fees + 10% off all other MV - (2.1 million)
 - DBS Principal payment suspension 2 months (all DBS clients) (1.9 million)
 - Samoa Airways Advance - (1 million)
 - 3 months free rent for businesses at the Airport (SAA) - (224,960.36)
 - 3 months free rent for businesses at wharves (SPA) - (158,514)
 - 2 months free rent for businesses at SLC markets (SLC) - (275,000)
 - 3 months free rent for private businesses at DBS - (100,000)
 - 20% discount on wharfage fees for 3 months (SPA) - (352,524)
 - 3 months' license refund for Stevedoring (SPA) - (18,112.50)
 - 50% reduction in Hotel Daily Fixed Rates for 3 months (EPC) - (273,000)
 - NPF- 6 months will be given whereby Private Sectors will not have to pay for
 - 2 months no lease paid for buildings belonging to NPF
 - 6 months' rent free for those renting in buildings belonging to STA
 - 2 months' rent free ACC buildings- (those utilizing the market at Fugalei)
 - 2 million donation by ACC to the budget
 - SPA 3 months' free rent/lease for businesses situated on the Ports
 - SAA- 3 months free rent for businesses situated at the Airport
 - EPC- 50% decrease electricity costs for Hotels
 - LTA- Bus and Transport fees will not be paid for those registered in June-
 (No more late fees applicable to all)
 - Ministry for Revenue- 2 months' extension for revenue and penalties removed
 - MOF- government pays 3 months of loans for Samoa Business Hub users.
 - DBS- interest rates will be ceased for two months on all customer's loans
 - SLC- 2 months free rent for businesses at SLC market
 - 1 million allocated for Samoa Airways while they face challenges of no operations during these times.

Secure Purchasing Power of the Citizen - 27.5 million

- Free Up Trade - (2.4 million)
- 3 months 2 % interest relief for h/hold loans - (2.4 million)
- NPF- refund loan repayments (for March 2020) - (5.5 million)
- Special Pension (one-off \$300 top up per pensioner for the month of May) - (3 million)
- EPC Unit charge reduction (10 sene reduction) - (8.3 million)
- SWA water rate reduction (20 sene reduction) - (1.3 million)
- 3-month moratorium on all Samoa Housing loan repayment - (3.1 million)

- 50% reduction in loan interest rates for 6 months - (1.5 million)
- 20% redundant payments for workers laid off. Minister stated that contributors are now eligible for this benefit
- LTA - 10% decrease in transportation fees.
- MCR - duty and taxes waived for specific items.
- 3 months, government will pay interest rates (2% interest in Commercial Banks) for businesses.

3.5 million Food Security Response - Agriculture

- PPE - (20,338)
- Awareness - (5,959.51)
- Livestock - (124,825.19)
- Crops - (821,288)
- SROS Commercial arm - (2.5 million)
- Minister stated that these are proactive measures in the possible scenario of the ceasing of exporting of food items.
- SROS Commercial Arm – encouraged to produce flour, etc...

2.5 Million for Multi-Sectoral Response

- FESA/EMT and Police - (1 million)
- Education (ACC) - (.5 million)
- Community Outreach (ACC) - (.5 million)
- Communication - (.5 million)

The Hon Minister affirmed that Government workers will not be laid off and that Small Businesses will be eligible for a grant from Development Bank of Samoa (DBS); Hon Minister stated that there will be a Council with the portfolio of monitoring prices of goods. Furthermore, the DBS and Commercial Banks (BSP, ANZ, SCB) have pledged support to the public for the time period of 6 months. The Hon Minister acknowledged the private sector and public sector for their support.

66.3 million breakdown:

- 18.2 million- SOE's and Ministries Contribution
- 9.8 million- forgone revenue
- 38.3 million

44.8 million tala from Contributors (Government Ministries and SOE's)

Minister stated that figures presented does not include expenditure and revenue.

Net Total additional revenue = 36.6million Tala

Overview of Expenditures to be reduced/reprioritised

(1) \$321,816 – will be reduced and reprioritised from the Ministry of Agriculture's Budget as follows

- FAO Subregional Office - \$11,835

- Open Day - \$20,902
- Agriculture Show - \$100,067
- Replanting of coconuts - \$30,081
- Breadfruit Propagation - \$30,000
- ACP Ministerial Meeting - \$28,931

(2) \$500,00 to be reduced from under the Budget if the Ministry of Education

- These funds were provided for the Pacific Festival of Arts which has now been postponed to 2021.

(3) \$2million to be reduced from under the Budget of the Office of the Electoral Commissioner

- This is part of the provision allocated for the new Electoral Building which has been delayed by usual processes and it is envisaged that actual construction will not require payment until the new fiscal year.

(4) \$100,000 to be reduced from the Budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- These funds were allocated for the hosting of the Pacific Ocean Conference proposed for May 2020 which will not eventuate.

The Hon Minister asserted that despite the detrimental effects anticipated for the economy, the Government will assist and protect the nation from the pandemic and will also stimulate economic growth through reprioritization of Government spending as well as extending the assistance to the citizens and the private sector through these times of uncertainty. The Hon Minister asserted that this is Government's early response and that there will be a longer term plan to be publicised in the near future.

Hon SILI conveyed confidence in the stimulus plan and stated that this was a way to mobilize liquidity and ensure the economy continues to mobilize during these times. He then reiterated his faith in the presented budget that it is sufficient to mobilize and stimulate growth especially considering the timeframe intended for the budget. He concluded that Samoa is a nation founded on God and as we prepare to remember the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ who died for our sins let us repent and prepare ourselves mentally and spiritually. Easter gives us Hope that we serve a living God.

Hon Prime Minister – Susuga TUILAEPA Lupesoliai Neioti Dr Sailele Malielegaoi

The Hon PM commended Minister of Finance on the presentation of the budget and emphasised that we are not a wealthy nation (no minerals or riches) hence the supplementary appropriation which although is not enough, it will help suffice to prevent and counter the Covid19.

**Motion moved to set aside Standing Order 133;
so as to deliberate on the budget under COU**

SITTING ADJOURNED TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE

*******S.O 33(2) Adjournment for Urgent Public Business*******

**Speaker selected a few Members to speak on the Bill during its second reading. Members were given 5 minutes each.*

1. GATOLOAIFAANA Amataga Alesana – Gidlow Chairperson for Social Sector Committee, Member for Faasalelega No.1

The Hon Member acknowledged her fellow Parliamentarians; acknowledged the Minister for Finance, Cabinet, Private Sector and the Public Sector. She then reiterated the statements made by the Hon PM that Samoa does not have minerals and riches in her land (other than agriculture) we are not a wealthy nation. Hence her gratitude to Government for lending the assistance and proposing means to lessen the burden on our people and to assist with easing the impacts of this pandemic. She stated that we live in the age of heroes and heroes are to be called upon during these chaotic times. The Hon Member acknowledged the Ministry and Minister of Health; and acknowledged the swiftness of response by the Hon Prime Minister in executing the lockdown which (in her belief) has saved multitudes of lives.

She concluded by stating whether it was an appropriate time to consider pay cuts for Parliamentarians; and jested for elections to be postponed in light of remarks made by her fellow Parliamentarian in previous proceedings. Hon Member conveyed support for the supplementary budget.

2. TAFUA Maluelue Tafua - Chirperson for Infrastructure Sector Committee, Member for Aleipata Itupa i Lalo

The Member commended the Budget especially the addition of \$300 appropriated for the Pensioners for the following month. He asserted the notion that “Chance favours a prepared mind” and commended Cabinet on being proactive in its response to the pandemic. He then called the Nation for Unity i.e (help those who have less than you – help your neighbours in this time of need). Afioga TAFUA stated that this is a morning of thanksgiving and praise as we are nearing Easter. He then reminded the Minister of Communication and Information Technology for the radio and TV coverage in his constituency to be fixed as it is still not functional.

3. Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Pierre Laufo - Chairperson for Economic Sector Committee, Member for Anoamaa West

The Hon Member reiterated sentiments echoed by International leaders that we are in times of war with an invisible enemy. The COVID-19 is an enemy that 'DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE' regardless of financial status, age, gender, etc...

He asserted the importance of protective gear to appropriately equip our front line heroes (health workers) so as to effectively fight this battle. He acknowledged the reduction of interest rates as mentioned in the budget. Hon LAUOFO acknowledged the Minister of Finance in being proactive in placing a timeframe on the allocated budget, and for asserting that there is a contingency if the timeframe aforementioned for the current budget elapses.

4. Afioga Hon FAUMUINA Tiatia Liuga - Deputy Chairperson for Finance and Expenditure Committee and Member for Palauli le Falefa

The Hon Member commended the Minister of Finance for the Supplementary Budget and noted that the Stimulus Package reduces the deficit from 5% to 1.2%. Afioga FAUMUINA spoke on the 4.4million provided to the private sector and suggested that the Government should cross check whether the beneficiaries of the financial assistance are still in operation to avoid negatives such as borrowing, begging, etc...

Acknowledged the permission granted to small businesses (food stalls in front of supermarkets) as they also need to earn income. The Hon Member acknowledged the stimulus package in having provisions for small businesses in terms of loan repayments. He then echoed the biblical verse mentioned by the Hon PM "Though I walk through the valley of death I shall fear no evil" and asserted that Samoa is a blessed nation as it is founded on God.

Hon FAUMUINA touched upon the 3.5million allotted to the Ministry of Agriculture and advised support and assistance for Fishermen. The Hon Member called for the utilization of out-posts to enable people to work from home and cited the positives such as saving electricity costs, food, etc...

Proceedings were suspended at 10:52am

Proceedings reconvened at 11:28am.

5. Afioga ALIIMALEMANU Alofa Tuuau - Chairperson for Finance and Expenditure Committee, Member for Alataua West

The Member noted the appropriations of the Stimulus Package and expressed appreciation to the Minister of Finance and the Ministry. Afioga ALIIMALEMANU then stated the pros and cons of the media in light of allocation of budget for more developed states. i.e) the possibility of our people

comparing the benefits of Samoa to foreign nations and reiterated the fragile state of the economy of Samoa in comparison to developed nations.

(Government Response) MINISTER OF FINANCE - SILI Epa Tuioti

The Hon Minister noted that the absence of any queries was an indication of the House supporting and approving of the Bill. Hon SILI responded to criticisms hurled towards Ministers and CEO's continuing to travel during the SOE. The Minister commented on the importance of international travels so as to continue communications between donor's i.e) World Bank, ADB and IMF, etc...

Mr Speaker put forth the question for the Bill to be read a second time; motion seconded and approved.

3. Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.2) 2019/2020 - Consideration in Detail

First schedule: Addition in Appropriations

Addition to Transactions on Behalf of the State (Agriculture and Finance) - 972,410

Addition to Transactions on Behalf of the State (Finance) - 37,0370,122; approved

Total Additional Overall Expenditure 2019-2020 - \$38,342,532; approved

Second Schedule: Reduction in Appropriations

MAFF - Reduction in Transaction on Behalf of the State - (321,72a5); approved

MESC - Reduction in Transaction on BoS - (500,00)

MFAT - Reduction on BoS - (100,000); approved

OEC - reduction on BoS - (2,000,000); approved

TOTAL REDUCTION OVERAL EXPENDITURE 2019-2020 - (\$2,921,735); approved

Second Schedule; Approved without amendments

Clause 2: approved

Clause 3: approved

Schedules: approved

Clause 1 and Short Title: approved

The Bill progressed without amendments.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE ADJOURNED AND HOUSE RECONVENED ITS PROCEEDINGS

4. Prisons and Corrections Amendment Bill 2020- first reading

The Hon Minister of Customs and Revenue and Prisons, Afioga TIALAVEA Fea Seigafolava Hunt moved a motion for the Bill to be first read;

Motion Seconded and approved

5. Prisons and Corrections Amendment Bill 2020 - second reading

The Hon Minister TIALAVEA Tionisio Hunt commended the rationale behind the Ministry of Police being handed the administrative role for the Prisons. (Police reabsorbs the Corrections Services and executes their functions). The Commissioner for Prisons portfolios to be imbibed into the Commissioner for police's ascribed portfolios. Hon Minister noted that to date the Ministry of Police are operating under a warrant and stated after it is passed in Parliament it will officially implement the change. Hon TIALAVEA noted that the change is necessary and commented on the state of the Tanumalala Prison's and stated that the Mass Breakout which occurred was unforeseen and explained that an inspection of the Tafaigata prison marked the beginning of the inception of the idea to construct the new prison.

**Speaker selected a few Members to speak on the Bill during its second reading. Members were given 5 minutes each.*

1. Tofa NAFOITOA Talaimanu Keti, Member for GAGAEMAUGA Number 3:

The Member commended the Minister and conveyed support for the Bill; He asserted that the amendment will not be a challenge to the Ministry of Police as they have always been the administrative body. Tofa Nafaitoa stated that the Ministry of Police have always had the "MINDSET" to run the Prisons. Recalled his experience of 37 years in the ministry of police and his understanding of what the job entails.

He stated that the former establishment presented an overlapping of functions between the two Ministries. He then called for a salary raise for Prison Wardens and employees, and to consider the dangerous nature of the job of prison wardens, furthermore suggested training and capacity building activities to upskill the wardens. The Member concluded by urging the public to 'Stay Safe' during the pandemic.

2. FAAULUSAU Stowers, Member for Gagaifomauga No.3

The Member acknowledged the work put forth by the Ministry of Police in capturing of the escapees. She then suggested to further develop security methods to protect the nation from potential harm. In regards to Capacity Building and trainings for the wardens, the Member recommended front-liners at the Ministry to learn self-defence. FAAULUSAU then raised the need to increase salaries for the staff as they will have added duties and responsibilities. The member concluded by commending Government for their efforts in implementing the SOE for the safety of our people.

3. ILI Setefano- Member for Aana Alofi no.2

The Member acknowledged the merge of the Ministry of Police and the Prisons and Corrections Services. He then addressed Government's efforts in formulating the SOE with the aim to protect and safeguard our country from COVID19

In reference to the Bill, he queried whether this merge will prevent inmates from escaping; furthermore, whether there were any counselling services available to inmates to encourage them to serve their sentences and avoid breaking out and causing more stress and uncertainty to the Ministry, the community and to themselves.

4. SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tuivasa, Member for Vaimauga East

The Member noted that we are living in unprecedented times, therefore the importance of keeping our faith strong in our God for whom our nation is founded upon. SULAMANAIA then called for more sanctions on plane travels and jested that if the mass breakout occurred overseas the Minister will be forced to resign. He then used an example of the merger between LTA and the Ministry of Police as ineffective.

PM interjection – point of order

The Hon Prime Minister reminded the member that there are provisions under standing orders to protect the integrity of members of the public. This SO allows name suppression for members of the public to be protected in Parliament as they cannot answer to the statements made against or for them.

Mr Speaker ordered to remove the statements made by the Member for Vaimauga East from the Hansard.

5. FUIMAONO Te’o Samuelu Te’o - Member for FALEALILI East

Commended that the Covid19 has brought about positives such as Samoa once again turning back to a subsistent lifestyle (fishing and farming); further commended the Prison wardens for being allowed to ride out the durations of their contracts as per amendment; the Member expressed concerns on the selection process of the Deputy Commissioner and queried the possibility of utilizing the ACEO selection process as a gauge. He then conveyed support for the Bill and suggested whether wardens be appropriately equipped for their safety and wellbeing and called for Taser guns to be considered for the Wardens. The Member commented on the importance of the Rehab program and encouraged the former Commissioner of Prisons to see the positive in the negative.

(Government Response) TIALAVEA Tionisio Seigafolava Hunt

Acknowledged Members who spoke on the Bill and asserted that he and the Commissioner have taken notes in regards to the concerns raised by Members. The Hon Minister reassured that a pay rise will be considered. Furthermore, noted that the Ministry will visit the surrounding villages around the Prison who are most vulnerable in the events of a breakout and acknowledged the village of Lefaga for the assistance during the time of the breakout.

Question was put by Mr Speaker and the Bill was second read.

6. Prisons and Corrections Amendment Bill 2020- Consideration in detail

Clause 2 – Clause 14: approved

Clause 1 and Short Title: approved

The Prisons and Corrections Amendment Bill progressed without amendments.

7. Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.2) 2019/2020 - third reading

The Hon Minister of Finance, SILI Epa Tuioti moved a motion for the Bill to be third read; Motion seconded and approved.

The Bill was third read and passed the Assembly

8. Prisons and Corrections Amendment Bill 2020 - third reading

The Hon Minister of Customs and Revenue, TIALAVEA Fea Leniu Seigafolava Hunt moved a motion for the Bill to be third read;

Motion seconded and approved.

Bill was third read and passed the Assembly

Hon Prime Minister - TUILAEPa Lupesoliai Neioti Dr Sailele Malielegaoi

The Hon Prime Minister echoed sentiments on the rationale behind the Stimulus Package Budget. He acknowledged Mr Speaker and his fellow Parliamentarians. He stated that he had observed other nations Parliamentary Proceedings in response to the Covid19 and noted that upon his observation the numbers of Parliamentarians whom attended had been reduced significantly and attributed it to fears of being infected. He then noted that to date there is still no vaccine. Hon PM reiterated the timeframe intended for this budget and asserted that the time to reconvene for the Annual Budget is near. He affirmed that Government will take a proactive approach on the best course of action for the nation pertaining to the COVID-19 and called upon Households to utilize technology to attend church services. He concluded by wishing all a Happy Easter.

MOTION – Hon Prime Minister

Hon PM moved that the Sitting be adjourned and reconvened on the 28th April specifically to discuss the Electoral Bill;

Motion Seconded and approved

MR SPEAKER

Hon Speaker touched upon the importance of taking a proactive approach so as to stem the tide in containing the Covid19.

**Proceedings adjourned at 1:01 pm;
will reconvene on Tuesday 28th April 2020 at 9am.**