

2022 Midterm Election Results in the Western Pacific Region



American Samoa

Elections for all 20 seats of the American Samoa House of Representatives took place Nov. 8, 2022, with legislators assuming office at noon January 3 following their election. According to *Talanei*, 15 of the 20 incumbent members of the House of Representatives are returning to the Fono after the midterm election, with five running unopposed. None of the 10 women candidates who ran were successful and for the first time in two decades, there will not be a female in the House of Representatives.



We spoke with reelected official Samuel Meleisea, representing District 15, about his views on fisheries management. Meleisea has served

on the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council American Samoa Advisory Panel since 2019, and is also a member of the Marine Railway Board to help the territory's fisheries and fishermen.

"I am truly humbled at the opportunity to return and continue my service to our populous district of Tualauta. Our marine ecosystem and subsequent fisheries are vital to American Samoa, and many of my constituents depend upon it for their livelihoods. That is why I am involved in the Advisory Panel for the Council, so that the needs of my constituents are represented.

The Fono drafted a House resolution in support of our fisheries and fishermen during the Large Vessel Prohibited Area legal battle between the American Samoa Government (ASG) and NOAA. However, federal overreach has become more evident in recent actions like the proposed Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument expansion. And recently, NOAA proposed to change how it calculates fishing days in Pacific waters for U.S.-flagged vessels, thus placing further financial pressure on the U.S. and American Samoa

fishing fleet. The common issue tying all these instances together is the lack of communication between NOAA and our territorial government.

ASG is not consulted, nor are we part of the initial discussions involving policy set by NOAA that can have lasting implication(s) for our local economy. The Fono is firmly supportive of Governor Lemanu and Congresswoman Uifa'atali in their efforts to curb federal overreach in the area of marine ecosystems and the U.S. exclusive economic zone around American Samoa. These issues and more seem to fall on deaf ears from our observation with NOAA and the State Department. Fortunately, the Council has been reliably engaged with the Territory and its stakeholders. We can't afford to be silent or passive on these issues."

Hawai'i

Democrats Josh Green and his running mate, Sylvia Luke, were elected as Hawai'i Governor and Lieutenant Governor, respectively, Nov. 8, 2022, and will be inaugurated December 5. While addressing climate change is among Green and Luke's top five priorities, their position on supporting the fishing industry is unknown. Green's website does say his administration will address the overall cost of living "by eliminating taxes on food, medicine and other essentials to help make Hawai'i more affordable for residents."

Before the next legislative session begins, Green will be assembling his Cabinet, naming new heads for the state's 18 departments, including the Department of Land and Natural Resources that has a seat on the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council. He has said he supports DLNR's Holomua Marine 30x30 efforts.

Democrats also swept the Hawai'i votes across the board for all Districts of the State Senate and most of the State House, except for Districts 39, 41, 42 and 43 (all on O'ahu). 🐟

Who will be the next Governor for the CNMI?



Gov. Ralph Torres

Lt. Gov. Arnold Palacios

After a 21-hour election process, Governor Ralph DLG Torres and his running mate, Senator Vinnie Vinson F. Sablan (R-Saipan), won the Nov. 8, 2022 general election, but were unsuccessful at gaining a majority vote from the residents of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Because of this, a runoff election will take place against the Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and his running mate, Saipan Mayor David M. Apatang (I), Nov. 25, 2022.

It was a fairly tight race with the Torres-Sablan team obtaining 5,726 votes (~39% of the total votes cast) and Palacios-Apatang receiving 4,890 votes (~33%). Rep. Christina E. Sablan and her running mate, Rep. Leila Haveia Staffler (D), came in last with 4,132 votes (28%).

Attorney General Edward E. Manibusan was reelected for his third four-year term after defeating his lone challenger, former Superior Court associate judge Juan T. Lizama.

Under the CNMI Senate, three Republicans, two independents, and one Democrat emerged triumphant. The 23rd Senate will have four Republicans, three Independents and two Democrats. The incoming House of Representatives will be composed of 13 Independents, four Democrats and three Republicans.

For the Mayoral election, Ramon "RB" Camacho (I) just edged out his opponent to win the seat for Saipan. Aubry Manglona Hocog (R) became the Mayor of Rota. Current Tinian Mayor Edwin Aldan (R) ran unopposed, and the Northern Islands chose Valentino Taisacan (R).

All elected officials will take office Jan. 9, 2023. 🐟