



MidWeek

This column by Senator Michelle Kidani was published in the MidWeek WEST VOICE section on Wednesday, May 9, 2018.

Legislature adjourns 2018 session

The 2018 regular session of the State legislature adjourned last week. I am pleased to note that we committed major funding to education initiatives, including just over \$900,000 for bonuses for teachers who commit to hard-to-staff schools, and an additional \$400,000 for stipends to support the Grow Our Own teacher education program. Other bills will extend and enhance services to the homeless and commit the state to new affordable housing programs. We also secured emergency funding for immediate relief efforts underway on Kauai and in East Oahu following April's destructive rainfall and flooding.



For Senate district 18, we secured construction funds for major school projects in our area:

- ◇ **Waipahu High School** - \$20.5 million for a new classroom building;
- ◇ **Kaleiopu`u Elementary** - \$650,000 for renovation and expansion of the school cafeteria;
- ◇ **Kanoelani Elementary** - \$300,000 to increase the capacity of the cafeteria; and
- ◇ **UH West Oahu** - \$5 million for renovation and construction at the campus center and Library.

In response to concerns expressed by residents of the **Royal Kunia** neighborhood about a development project in their area, the Legislature approved changes to county land use requirements to improve oversight of the development of residential condominiums on agricultural lands. While these changes will not address the current dispute at The Meadows in Royal Kunia, it should prevent such situations from occurring in the future.

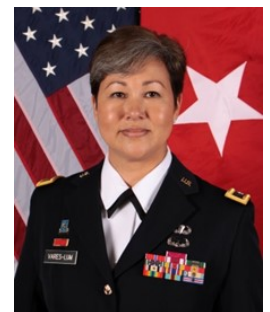


This session we also got to know **Waipahu High School junior Justine Jumalon**. Justine (at left) volunteered to spend her Spring break working at the Capitol during an especially busy time of year. She became familiar with details of the legislative process and assisted staff with logistics for my education committee hearings. At school, Justine is President of the Marauder Band, maintains a GPA just a hair under 4.0, and is ranked in the top 25 of her class of more than 500. We're grateful for Justine's help and wish her well as she plans to pursue studies in political science.

Congratulations graduates!

This past weekend I attended the spring semester commencement at **UH West Oahu**. Featured speaker was Brigadier General Suzanne Vares-Lum (at right). Her backstory is inspiring. She is from Wahiawa, graduated from Aiea High School and earned a BA in journalism and MA in Education from UH Manoa. She put her teaching degree to good use as a classroom teacher at Castle and Kalaheo High Schools.

However, another part of her professional training began when she enrolled in the UH Manoa ROTC program, and that led to her current career. She became a citizen-soldier in the Hawaii National Guard, rose through the ranks, and was the Army's first female



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brigadier general of Native Hawaiian Ancestry. She now has responsibilities in strategic planning and policy at the highest levels the Pacific Military Command here in Hawaii.

BG Vares-Lum is a wonderful role model for the just over 300 UHWO students who received diplomas or certificates this past weekend. We are grateful for her service, and for her willingness to encourage and motivate these new graduates.

Later this month, **Waipahu High School** will award diplomas in ceremonies at Blaisdell Center. Twelve seniors in the Class of 2018 have actually already earned their associate in arts college degrees from Leeward Community College – before receiving their high school diplomas! They have been nicknamed the ‘Olympians’ for their hard work and perseverance that give them a great start toward future success.

Congratulations and good luck to the Marauders and all of our 2018 graduates. Your teachers, mentors, coaches and families have given you the skills and confidence to succeed in the years ahead.



From left, Crezel Alegado, Shuntle Maneja, Edna Mae Felix, Elisha Ramones, Leanne Villanueva, Sharmaine Allas, Jillian Panganiban, David Ballesteros-Brown, Rovy Dipaysa, Lorainne Hernandez, Jaylynn Subia and WHS Principal Keith Hayashi. Not pictured: Kristine Acosta. In back at left, WHS Early College director Mark Siliman.