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## **2024 Edition of the American Samoa Administrative Code – First Update in 34 Years!**

The Governor of American Samoa, Lemanu P. S. Mauga, and Lt. Governor and Secretary of American Samoa, La’apui Talauega E. V. Ale, are pleased to announce the release of the Official 2024 Edition of the American Samoa Administrative Code, the first such release in thirty-four (34) years.

Governor Lemanu and Lt. Governor La'apui prioritized this as one of their primary objectives upon assuming office, emphasizing the importance of clarity regarding the laws for both those enforcing them and those subject to them. In response, they implemented two significant initiatives to tackle this matter.

### **1. RULE REFORM INITIATIVE**

#### **2024 Edition of the American Samoa Administrative Code**

The Administrative Code is a collection of Rules and Regulations that govern the operations of government agencies. These agencies are required by law to establish Rules of practice detailing procedures, operations, and public access.

Local law further requires that these Rules be updated, published, and made accessible to the public every two years but the last known official publication was from 1990. Agencies have continued to update, revise, amend, and implement new Rules since then, but public access and awareness have been severely lacking until now. With the assistance of local and off-island legal communities, federal agencies, local agencies, and concerned members of the general public, extensive efforts have succeeded in recovering, verifying, updating, and publishing the current release of the Administrative Code.

## Comprehensive Administrative Rule Reform (CARR) Project

While the publication project was underway, the Rule Reform Panel led the way supporting agencies in their efforts to enhance and modernize their Rules, ensuring the Rules align with current standards and best practices. This initiative not only enhanced the efficiency and clarity of the Rules but also facilitated a structured and systematic framework for updating and refining the rule development process.

### **2. MODERNIZATION INITIATIVE**

#### Online Presence and Digital Records Management

Federal funding has allowed heads of respective branches of government to have access to hard copies of the 2024 Edition of the Administrative Code. This crucial document serves as a cornerstone for guiding administrative procedures and regulations within the government. Digital copies of the Administrative Code are now conveniently available on the Office of the Secretary of American Samoa website at [www.osas.as.gov](http://www.osas.as.gov), ensuring easy access and dissemination of this essential information.

Moreover, the Office of the Secretary's website has been modified into a comprehensive repository of legal materials and resources. The repository includes a wide array of documents such as Public Laws, Executive Orders, and other legal and historical records that are pivotal for understanding the legal framework and historical context of American Samoa. Efforts are ongoing to expand and diversify the collection of documents available on the website, enriching the resources accessible to the public and government officials alike.

In a strategic move towards sustainability and efficiency, federal funding has also been instrumental in procuring state-of-the-art scanning equipment and a robust document management system. This investment enables the government to transition towards a more environmentally friendly approach by reducing paper consumption. The scanning equipment and document management system facilitate the digitization, storage, and efficient retrieval of government records, streamlining administrative processes and promoting a greener and more sustainable operational model.

#### Notaries Public

The Secretary's role extends to the oversight and regulation of all Notaries Public in American Samoa, ensuring that they adhere to the highest standards of professionalism and ethical conduct. In a significant move towards modernization and accessibility, an innovative online notary course was introduced on November 15, 2022, tailored to accommodate the schedules of notarial candidates who worked full-time. The response to this initiative has been overwhelmingly positive, with participants praising the convenience and effectiveness of this digital training platform. Building upon this success, the program has been expanded to include two classes per year, with the aim of certifying a greater number of notaries and enhancing the overall quality of notarial services in American Samoa. Efforts are also underway to develop an on demand

notarial course, further enhancing its availability and paving the way to increasing the number of commissioned notaries public.

Looking ahead, there are ongoing efforts to introduce further enhancements to the notarial system, including the implementation of remote online notarizations in specific and limited circumstances. This development is particularly crucial for individuals residing in remote areas such as Manu'a, where access to traditional notarial services may be limited. Additionally, this initiative aims to address the needs of elderly individuals who may face challenges in physically meeting a notary public. By embracing technological advancements and adapting to the evolving needs of the community, the Lemanu and La'apui administration remains committed to ensuring that these kinds of services remain accessible, efficient, and secure for all residents of American Samoa.

### 3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Governor Lemanu and Lt. Governor La'apui wish to express their sincere gratitude and appreciation for the remarkable dedication and unwavering commitment demonstrated by the esteemed members of the Rule Reform Panel. Each individual, including Attorney General Fainu'ulele Falefatu Ala'ilima-Utu, Administrative Law Judge Marie Ala'ilima-Lafaele, Treasurer Malemo Tausaga, Budget Director Catherine Saelua, Executive Director Blanche Lulu Barber of the American Samoa Economic Development Agency, and the Governor's Chief Legal Counsel Kristi Thaxton, has played a pivotal role in shaping and advancing the rule reform initiatives.

Furthermore, a special acknowledgment is extended to Lydia Faleafine-Nomura, the American Samoa Field Representative for the Office of Insular Affairs, whose invaluable assistance has been instrumental in the success of the reform efforts. The Rule Reform Officers from each of the active executive branch agencies, along with their dedicated Directors, have also made significant contributions that have greatly enhanced the efficacy and efficiency of the rule reform process.

It is through the collaborative efforts and expertise of these esteemed individuals that notable progress has been made in promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance. Their collective efforts have not only facilitated the implementation of meaningful reforms but have also set a strong foundation for the continued improvement of governance practices in American Samoa.

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