

For Official Release  
PR001-02142025  
Office of the Governor  
Utulei, American Samoa  
February 14, 2025



**Governor Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula and Lieutenant Governor Pulumataala Ae Ae Jr. Visit Leone High School to Celebrate Teacher of the Year Finalist, Ms. Mikaela Saelua.**



LEONE, American Samoa – The teachers and students of Leone High School, proud home of the Lions, had an unforgettable start to their school week on Monday as they welcomed the Honorable Governor Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula and Lieutenant Governor Pulumataala Ae Ae Jr. for a special visit. The esteemed leaders, accompanied by members of their cabinet, arrived on campus and made their way to the cafeteria, where they joined students for breakfast, shared a meal, and engaged in meaningful conversation.

This visit held great significance, marking the first high school visit by the Governor and Lieutenant Governor since taking office. It was also a momentous occasion as they gathered to

honor and congratulate Ms. Mikaela Saelua, the 2025 American Samoa Teacher of the Year and a finalist for the National Teacher of the Year award.

In a special ceremony hosted by Leone High School, Governor Pulaali'i delivered a keynote address celebrating the school's achievements and recognizing the extraordinary accomplishments of Ms. Saelua. "This special occasion is dedicated to honoring Ms. Mikaela Saelua for her remarkable achievements and unwavering commitment to educating and nurturing the children of American Samoa," said Governor Pulaali'i. He further emphasized the significance of Ms. Saelua's recognition, noting, "Among all the teachers in the United States, including our territory, Mikaela Saelua is one of only four finalists for the National Teacher of the Year award.

Governor Pulaali'i presented Ms. Saelua with an official congratulatory letter that read in part, "On behalf of the people of American Samoa, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to you on being selected as a finalist for the 2025 National Teacher of the Year Award. This prestigious recognition reflects your outstanding commitment to education, your passion for nurturing the minds of our students, and your tireless dedication to shaping a brighter future for our community."

Lieutenant Governor Pulumataala Ae Ae Jr. also delivered remarks, presenting Ms. Saelua with an award for her dedication and contributions to education. "It is a tremendous honor and privilege to see one of our own educators recognized for their hard work and dedication," said Lieutenant Governor Ae Ae Jr. "Though we are a small island, we continue to excel in education. We thank Ms. Saelua for her invaluable contributions to the children of American Samoa."

In her remarks, Ms. Saelua expressed gratitude for the recognition, acknowledging the support of her students, teachers, and the Leone High School community. She shared her appreciation for the Governor and Lieutenant Governor's visit, saying, "It is truly an honor to welcome you all to Leone High School, where we take pride in our students, our teachers, and our community. Your presence here means a lot, and we appreciate the opportunity to share a glimpse of the work we do here on a daily basis."

Ms. Saelua also highlighted the school's guiding motto, "Unity is Our Strength," reflecting the collective efforts of the entire Leone High School community. "We persevere and progress together, and I carry that spirit with me as I move forward in this journey toward the National Teacher of the Year award," she said.

The ceremony concluded with the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and their administration joining Mr. and Ms. Leone High School in a special dance, celebrating not only Ms. Saelua's achievements but also the collective success of the entire Leone community.

**About Ms. Mikaela Saelua:**

Ms. Saelua, an educator at Leone High School, teaches English to juniors, sophomores, and seniors. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and a Master of Education in Curriculum Studies from the University of Hawaii.

In addition to her teaching, Ms. Saelua is an active leader, serving as the Department Head of English Language Arts and Chairperson of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). She is also the Senior Class of 2025 Advisor and volleyball coach.

Ms. Saelua will depart for Washington D.C. on February 13 to compete for the 2025 National Teacher of the Year Award.

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