

Sales tax bill nets many questions from faipule

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House hearing focuses on collection of 2% wage tax

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Samoana wins 'Clash of the Titans' against Leone

B1

Hope House board chairman Ta'afano Joe Tavale (far right) last week, accepted boxes of clothing - for the Hope House Goodwill Store - from the Hawaiian Airlines staff and management in Honolulu, donated by and through Senior Vice President of Corporate Communications, Ann Botticelli.

Hawaiian Air local station manager Tuli Fruean and Hawaiian Air official Sia Passi-Burgos, made the presentation to Ta'afano.

[photo: Hope H



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Public hearings will be held prior to any hikes in port fees

REP. VE'EVALU: IT'S NOT FAIR TO PROPOSE ALL THESE TAXES, WHEN THERE'S NO INCREASE IN WAGES

by Fili Sagapolutele

Samoa News Correspondent

The director of Port Administration does not make the final decision on future hikes for port fees and charges but instead, such matters go through public hearings, in accordance with provision of the Administrative Procedures Act.

This is according to testimony by Attorney General Talauega Eleasalo Ale, during last Thursday's House committee hearing.

Several fees and charges at the Port will be increased

under the proposed bill, which includes provisions stating that fees and charges "may be modified every five years." Additionally, "the Port director shall review these fees every five years and, if necessary, initiate modification of fees and charges under this chapter in accordance with provision of the Administrative Procedures Act."

When the bill was discussed last Thursday, some lawmakers voiced their concerns with giving only one person, the Port director, the authority to review such fees and charges

every five years, and initiate any modification.

Many in the private sector, including G.H.C Reid & Company, and Neil's ACE Home Center, have raised the same concern.

Talauega explained that while the Port director can initiate review of such fees and charges, that doesn't mean the director is the sole person who makes the final decision.

Talauega, who is also chairman of the ASG Revenue Task Force, said the full explanation

(Continued on page 7)

ASDOE's \$24.7M consolidated grant application is approved

GRANT MONEY SUPPORTS BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

by Fili Sagapolutele

Samoa News Correspondent

The US Department of Education (USDOE) has approved the local Department of Education's Consolidated Grant of more than \$24 million, which is the largest federal funding source for ASDOE.

The grant money is used to pay for various expenses, including teachers.

During the ASDOE fiscal year 2018 budget hearing yesterday before the Fono Joint Budget Committee, Education director Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga shared the good news when asked about issues on grants for the department. In a brief statement after the budget hearing, Matagi-Tofiga explained that she was informed by the USDOE on Sept. 1st that the ASDOE Consolidated Application has been approved for a total of \$24.7 million.

Matagi-Tofiga extends her gratitude to ASDOE's grant team, ASDOE divisions, "and our private schools for putting our application together."

(As previously reported by Samoa News, the Consolidated Grant also supports private schools on island.)

"Consolidating projects under the federal formula grant program was indeed our major task," she said, and pointed out that the Consolidated Grant "is now a 3-year cycle [and] ASDOE is now working on the monitoring and reporting of 2016 consolidated projects."

According to ASG budget documents, ASDOE's proposed FY 2018 budget totals \$65.63 million, with \$18.6 million funded by local revenues, and just over \$47 million in grants - which includes \$16.79 million from consolidated grants that is providing \$10.7 million to pay

for personnel costs.

Other federal grants in the FY 2018 budget include: Special Education \$6.28 million; Early Childhood Education \$3.74 million; School Lunch Program (which is funded by the US Department of Agriculture) \$19.23 million; and the Territories & Freely Associated States Education Grant \$977,000

ASDOE's FY 2018 budget hearing lasted not more than 15 minutes.

Matagi-Tofiga was asked about the status of classroom teachers, to which she responded that a vast majority of schools are well staffed, except for just a few positions that need to be filled, as teachers continue to resign every week.

She said no classroom is left unattended, or without a teacher, with school counselors and principals stepping in if a teacher is absent.

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Seven local athletes have been selected to represent American Samoa for the first time ever, at the 5th Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games set to be held Sept. 17-27 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, where they will compete alongside their Oceania counterparts and all 45 member countries of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA).

Out of the 21 sports competitions, Team American Samoa will compete in two - Wrestling and Track & Field - as one of the 17 Oceania National Olympic Committees (ONOC) that will be attending these games for the first time.

(Read story in the sports section of Samoa News Sept. 11 edition.)

Coverage of the games is sponsored by Carl's Jr.

Meet Pita Fanolua, a student at the American Samoa Community College (ASCC) who will be representing American Samoa at the Asian Indoor Games in wrestling.

Fanolua and five other local wrestlers will be competing in various weight categories over a span of two days, Sept. 25-26, in an event where the level of competition, according to ASNOC general secretary Ethan Lake, is comparable to the Olympics.

[photo: courtesy]





The House Budget and Appropriations Committee held a hearing yesterday with members of the ASG task force to discuss the 7% sales tax. See story for full details. [photo: AF]

Sales tax bill nets many questions from faipule

REP. TOEAINA: IT'S TIME TO SETUP A HEARING WITH LOLO, SO WE CAN GET ANSWERS

by Ausage Fausia
Samoa News Reporter

While the Administration's multi-year plan is to amend existing law, and propose new revenues and repeals to improve local revenue generation for the government, Manu'a faipule, Rep. Toeaina Faufano Autele told the ASG task force yesterday that unless the government can fix the leak, ASG will continue to face financial problems forever.

"We need to look at every corner of the government to see what is going on there. For example, the Office of the Samoan Affairs. Some villages have two pulenu'u sitting on good salaries doing nothing. It's not the taxpayers' duty to provide money to pay those pulenu'u," he said.

"Look at what happens every Friday. You see a lot of government employees on the roadside doing clean-up, but where are the pulenu'u? That's their job. They were hired to look after their village and conduct clean-up around the island. I recommend to make each village pay for their own pulenu'u, and if they want to hire two or more, let them deal with it."

Members of the ASG task force appeared before the House Budget and Appropriations Committee yesterday morning, to testify on the Administration's proposed a 7% sales tax bill.

During the hearing, the task force was asked about the method the government will use to collect the sales tax, and who is responsible for the collections.

Deputy Treasurer of the Revenue Division, Keith Gebauer told the committee that the Tax Office will be responsible for collections, as stated in the bill, but it is the retailers' responsibility to submit their gross receipts, to make it easier for the government to do its job.

Gebauer said Tax Office employees have been working hard in the last two months, preparing everything before the legislation is passed, but added that there are some things that cannot be done until the bill is approved.

Such things include hiring of staff who can do the work, and also the procurement of the needed resources.

Rep. Vailoata Eteuati Amituana'i said if the sales tax is approved, the public will actually be paying 12% in taxes in the year 2018 - the 7% sales tax and the 5% miscellaneous excise tax.

The Governor's Executive Assistant, Iulogologo J. Pereira said the task force understands the concerns voiced by some of the committee members and also the public, but the whole purpose behind the sales tax, as recommended by Gov. Lolo M. Moliga, is to phase out the excise tax, while the sales tax is implemented to ensure that there is revenue coming in, when another revenue source is being completely repealed.

Rep. Veevalu Meauta Lauoi Mageo asked the task force what would happen if the Fono wished to amend the sales tax bill, starting from 2% and adding 1% for each year until 2022 - the same year the excise tax is expected to be completely removed.

Iulogologo said the suggestion is good, but the government needs the 7% sales tax to generate more local revenues.

Veevalu wondered if the task force considered any other type of tax to implement, instead of a sales tax.

Task force chairman, Attorney General Talauega Eleasalo Ale said they looked at all types of taxes, but at the end of their discussions, the sales tax was determined to be convenient and good for the government and the people of American Samoa.

House Speaker, Savali Talavou Ale chimed in, wanting to know what would happen if the House decided to let the Port fees and the excise tax remain, but drop the sales tax to a lower percentage.

Savali said he understands the many concerns raised by some faipule, the community, and mostly those from the business sectors; but on the other hand, the government is dealing with financial hardships, and leaders need to do something about it.

"We all understand that the government cannot operate without revenue, but at the same time, the community is begging their faipule to consider these revenue measures," he said.

"How can the government survive if there is less revenue coming in? I know this is a very hard decision but we need to look ahead and consider making a solid decision, so that both the government and the community will benefit."

In response, Talauega said the Fono has the authority to make any changes they want. Savali was quick to intervene, saying the House has not yet passed any amendments to the bill, but these were just

(Continued on page 8)

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Congresswoman Aumua Amata conferring with Congresswoman Jennifer González-Colón of the territory of Puerto Rico. Aumua has welcomed efforts by the Small Business Committee in examining the need to strengthen small businesses and streamline the federal process of obtaining permits. [photo: courtesy]

House hearing focuses on collection of 2% wage tax

COLLECTING FROM BUSINESSES IS THE PROBLEM, SAYS ASG TREASURER
by Fili Sagapolutele
Samoa News Correspondent

In the past, lawmakers have made claims that the government, through the Treasury Department, hasn't been consistent in collecting the 2% wage tax, which is paid by all wage earners.

The money is earmarked, under local law, for LBJ Medical Center's operation and the off-island referral program.

At last Thursday's House committee hearing, the issue surfaced again; and this time, it was House Speaker Savali Talavou Ale who sought a clear explanation from ASG Treasurer Uelinitone Tonumaiepa.

Savali doesn't believe there is a problem with collecting the wage tax - which will be repealed under provision included in the Administration's proposed 7% sales tax.

Tonumaiepa said there is no problem with collecting the wage tax from the employer, the

American Samoa Government, and once the money is received it's transmitted to the hospital.

According to him, the problem facing the Treasury Department is the wage tax collected from businesses.

Tonumaiepa explained that wage tax is filed when businesses file their taxes every three months and that's the time Treasury determines how much in wage tax to collect from a business.

He said many businesses don't pay upon filing the quarterly taxes but instead, they wait until the end of the year.

That's why it's very difficult to collect and transmit the money to the hospital when it comes to the wage tax collected from businesses, he said, and reiterated that the wage tax collected from ASG employees is transmitted to the hospital on a monthly basis.

Tonumaiepa's explanation comes at a time when the Fono

is conducting fiscal year 2018 budget hearings and it's always during this time when there are questions raised by lawmakers on why the government is falling behind in collecting the wage tax to help the hospital, which is facing its own financial troubles.

Some lawmakers over the years have suggested repealing the wage tax, which they and others in government consider an unfair tax targeting only wage earners, but not residents who earn a living via other means.

Other ASG officials have said publicly that employees being paid cash under the table also don't pay the wage tax.

The ASG Revenue Task Force estimates that \$3 million is collected annually from the wage tax. Under the hospital's FY 2018 proposed budget, LBJ is forecasting \$5 million to be collected from the wage tax, according to budget documents.



A moving spiritual skit was performed this past Sunday by members of the Ave o le Fetu Ao Methodist Church at Fagaima.

[photo: FS]



Youth members of the Ave o le Fetu Ao Methodist Church in Fagaima, performing a special skit during service this past Sunday.

[photo: FS]

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Fa'asilasilaga mo le Talanoaina Suafa SAGAPOLUTELE i le laoa i Ili'ili

O le a ta'oto ia fa'amaene o Tai loloto ou paia Samoa, ona o sa'u Fa'asilasilaga fa'aaloalo i o'u gafa tau Tupu ou te malu ai i le ao mamala o le atu Samoa. Ua ia te a'u le fa'aaloalo oute fa'atulou, ma fa'apa'i atu male fa'aeteete i le mamalu o le tatou aiga SAGAPOLUTELE i le Afio'aga o Ili'ili ia i latou uma o e tau malae i lenei Suafa. Ua iai le fa'amoemoe afio maia se'i o tatou mulumulu aufoe se tasi na te tausia lo tatou aiga i le afioaga ma le itumalo.

O le aso 30 o le masina o Setema 2017 i le taimi 10:00 a.m. ile taeao lava. O lou le auai e le taofia ai le filifiliga a lo tatou aiga. Tatou talosia ia tatou aulia ma le manuia le aso fa'amoemoeina i le alofa ma le agalelei o le Atua.

I le ava ma le fa'aaloalo tele,

O suli uma o le suafa Sagapolutele o lo'o tausia ma nonofo i le aiga.



Falana'ipupu Taase Sagapolutele shaking hands with U.S Coast Guard Sector Commander from Honolulu, Capt. Michael C. Long after the DPS Deputy Commissioner received his Certificate of Recognition last week. See story for details.

[photo: AF]

USCG recognizes local cops for their work

by Ausage Fausia
Samoa News Reporter

Three police officers, as well as Commissioner Le'i Sonny Thompson, were recognized last week by officials from the US Coast Guard, who collaborated with the Dept. of Public Safety earlier this year on a case involving a fatality on a fishing vessel.

The three police officers are: Deputy Commissioner, Falana'ipupu Ta'ase Sagapolutele, (head of the DPS Criminal Investigation Division (CID) at the time of the incident), Det. Misi Leo, and Det. Sili Sea.

The local law enforcement officers were each presented a Certificate of Recognition last Friday afternoon, in a brief ceremony held inside the Commissioner's conference room.

Capt. Michael C. Long, Sector Commander for the US Coast Guard in Honolulu, arrived last Monday night to present the certificates. Capt. Long, on behalf of the US Coast Guard, thanked Le'i and DPS for all their hard work, crediting their partnership and close collaboration for a smooth

investigation.

"In February 2017, the suspicious death of a US citizen aboard a US-flagged commercial fishing vessel, based out of Pago Pago, American Samoa, demanded an immediate investigation, which has ultimately required hundreds of man-hours to process a complex crime scene, conduct interviews, and collect multiple items of vital evidence," he shared, adding that the professionals from DPS answered the call and was the lead investigative agency.

He recognized the "expert detectives" who were involved and said, "The outstanding dedication, diligence, and professionalism are in keeping with the highest traditions of effective and cooperative inter-agency law enforcement. On behalf of the men and women of the Coast Guard Investigative Service, please accept my sincerest thanks."

Le'i thanked the USCG representatives for recognizing the efforts of local police officers and said, "It is one of those milestones; and our plan moving forward, in relation to the government, working together

with our people, and any law enforcement outside and around the Pacific, is to make sure that law and order is sustained and restored in our community, for the betterment of our people," he said. When asked about the results of their investigation, Capt. Long told Samoa News he cannot comment, as the investigation is still ongoing.

"We are still reviewing every single file that was handed over to us by detectives of the American Samoa police force, and so far - no suspect has been named," he said.

It was February 28 when police wrapped up their investigation into the death of a US citizen found dead on board a purse seiner on February 8.

The deceased was identified as Joshua David Bell, 35, from Jacksonville, Florida.

His body was found in one of the rooms inside the fishing boat. Sources told Samoa News that the navigator of an Asian owned boat had stab wounds on his neck.

The vessel had 37 crew members from Indonesia, Vietnam, China, Portugal, Taiwan and the Philippines.

Mexico diplomat talks immigration in California trip

LOS ANGELES (AP) — After a day huddling in California's capital on immigration, trade and climate, Mexico's top diplomat is hitting Los Angeles to close out a two-day visit to the immigrant-friendly state.

Mexico Foreign Relations Secretary Luis Videgaray's trip to California comes at a critical time in relations between his country and the United States and amid uncertainty over the future of a program that protects roughly 800,000 young immigrants who are living in the United States from deportation.

In Los Angeles, Videgaray will announce support for those young immigrants — hundreds of thousands of whom are Mexican. He'll also meet with community and business leaders and tout a program providing immigrant mental health services. He travels to Washington on Wednesday, where he plans to implore members of Congress to continue the program that President Donald Trump says will be terminated in six months if lawmakers do not act.

"We strongly hope the U.S.

Congress will act promptly to provide certainty and a permanent solution to these young people that want to stay in America," he said Monday in Sacramento before meeting with about 25 participants in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program.

Mexico last week announced plans to create a special job bank for those affected and support their educations. The country will also assist them with legal aid, Videgaray said.

Alongside immigration uncertainties, Videgaray's visit comes as negotiations to revise the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and Canada, demanded by Trump, got off to a rocky start.

Trump has said he could withdraw the United States from the 23-year-old pact between the two countries and Canada, and Mexico said it won't stay at the table if it doesn't get a fair deal. Noting the importance of trade between California and Mexico, Videgaray said he's hopeful for a deal that benefits all three nations.

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Compiled by Samoa News staff
PACIFIC TO BAN NORTH KOREAN FISHING BOATS

Pacific Islands Forum countries say they'll work to ban North Korean fishing vessels from their waters.

North Korea has tested nuclear warheads and threatened the United States Pacific territory of Guam in recent weeks, which the forum countries have condemned.

Speaking for the Forum leaders, Samoa's Prime Minister, Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, said the region would work to force North Korean boats out of their waters.

He said some North Korean vessels were fishing in the region using the flags of forum states, through the so-called flags of convenience system.

"New Zealand and Australia will assist other member states with intelligence gathering to identify illegal flagging of vessels by North Korea," Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi said.

(Source: RNZI)

DON'T FORGET THE CASKET BUDDY!

A video showing a hearse returning to pick up a casket it appeared to have dropped on the road in Apia has surfaced.

The video, taken by a member of the public, shows a black van turned into a hearse, turning around at the Malifa four corners to pick up the black casket left lying in the middle of the road amidst busy traffic.

The hearse driver promptly parks the car in the middle of the street, runs out and drags the casket back in, before driving off hurriedly.

It did not look like someone was inside the casket.

(Source: Samoa Observer)

COMMONWEALTH TO CO-OPERATE WITH FORUM

The Commonwealth's secretary general has told Pacific countries they need to collaborate more to address the challenges of climate change and illegal fishing. Patricia Scotland last week presented a report to the Pacific Islands Forum calling for improvements in areas including politics, data, "good governance," partnerships and sustainable finance. She said with the pressures they face, it's vital that small island nations share intelligence and resources - such as sharing monitoring tools, observers and satellite systems to monitor illegal fishing. Ms. Scotland said countries need to share information and not use commercial sensitivities as an excuse. "We know that unless we are better at data sharing, some of the real assets that need to be preserved for our countries and our world, are going to be illegally stolen," said Patricia Scotland.

(Source: RNZI)

TUNA CATCH LIMIT PRO-

POSED FOR GUAM, NMI, AND AM. SAMOA

The National Marine and Fisheries Services is proposing a catch limit of 2,000 metric tons of longline-caught bigeye tuna for Guam, the Northern Marianas and American Samoa, in a bid to support the long-term sustainability of fishery resources of the U.S. Pacific islands. "Without this catch limit, these U.S. territories would not be subject to a limit because, as participating territories to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, they do not have a bigeye tuna limit under international measures adopted by the WCPFC," NMFS said in its filing recently posted on the Federal Register.

Based on this proposed action, NMFS would authorize each U.S. Pacific territory to allocate up to 1,000-mt of its

2,000-mt bigeye tuna limit to U.S. longline fishing vessels that are permitted to fish under the Fishery Ecosystem Plan for Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific. Citing an evaluation by the chief counsel for Regulation of the Department of Commerce, NMFS said there would be little— if any— disproportionate adverse economic impacts from the proposed rule based on gear type or relative vessel size. "The proposed rule also will not place a substantial number of small entities, or any segment of small entities, at a significant competitive disadvantage to large entities," said Chris Oliver, assistant administrator for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries. As an accountability measure, Oliver said, the

(Continued on page 6)



Baroness Patricia Scotland, Commonwealth Secretary General, speaks to the media during the 2017 Commonwealth Youth Games Opening on July 17, 2017 in Nassau, Bahamas.

[Photo: Mark Kolbe/Getty Images/AFP]



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WHEREAS, American Samoa has a varied coastline of rocky shores, sandy beaches, and harbors; and

WHEREAS, the natural resources of the coastal zone are among our most valuable economic resources; and


WHEREAS, the marine environment is of the most valuable resource supporting an active subsistence and commercial industry; and

WHEREAS, through the management, sustainment, and protection of our coastal zone and marine environment, future generations of American Samoa will benefit and prosper; and

WHEREAS, the Coastweeks theme: "A Healthy Coast is a Wealthy Coast" is our responsibility.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Lolo M. Moliga, Governor of American Samoa do hereby proclaim the period of September 18-30, 2017 as **Coastweeks in American Samoa** and urge all citizens to take notice of these weeks and participate fittingly.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto affixed my signature and the seal of my office on this 9th day of August, 2017.


LOLO M. MOLIGA
Governor of American Samoa



Harmonic People art work that made Andy Leleisi'uao the Paramount Winner for the Wallace Art Awards.

[Photo: Supplied]

Pacific...

Continued from page 5

NMFS will monitor catches of longline-caught bigeye tuna by the longline fisheries of each U.S. Pacific territory, including catches made by U.S. longline vessels operating under specified fishing agreements.

“When NMFS projects that a territorial catch or allocation limit will be reached, NMFS would...prohibit the catch and retention of longline-caught bigeye tuna by vessels in the applicable territory (if the territorial catch limit is projected to be reached), and/or vessels in a specified fishing agreement (if the allocation limit is projected to be reached),” NMFS said.

Meanwhile, the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council is evaluating its 2016 decision to reduce the area off-limits to large vessels along the coast of American Samoa, which has been invalidated by a federal court in Hawaii.

The court’s ruling issued in March was based on a lawsuit by the American Samoa Government which challenged the

NMFS’s decision to shrink the large vessel protected area to 12 miles from the shoreline, allowing vessels 50 feet and longer to net hauls traditionally reserved for local fishermen.

Fishing waters had been preserved for small boat fishing fleet from the shoreline out to 50 miles since 2002 and the court agreed that such policy is in line with efforts to preserve the American Samoans’ cultural fishing rights as implied under the Instruments of Cession.

“The council is currently reevaluating the (long vessel protected area) rule, including options to define cultural fishing rights in American Samoa that are subject to preservation and protection,” NMFS said.

(Source: Marianas Variety)

SAMOAN ARTIST PARAMOUNT WINNER AT WALLACE ART AWARDS

This year’s Paramount winner of New Zealand’s Wallace Art Awards says the achievement gives Pacific people a visual presence in the country. South Auckland artist Andy Leleisi'uao has been practicing his art since the early 1990s. Leleisi'uao said he was fortunate to win the accolade, but what was important was striving to help other Pacific artists get to the top. “There’s a constellation of us that are working and practicing every day and these younger artists need to track down the artist they enjoy and talk to them, you know, just make time to have coffee with them because there’s quite a few of us now and I think in order for them to grow and their work to grow further they need to just talk to these wonderful artists that we have while they’re still around.” Andy Leleisi'uao is now working towards exhibitions in the next couple of months in Raratonga and south Auckland’s Fresh Gallery.

(Source: RNZI)

SAMOA HOSTS TOP FIFA OFFICIALS

Football Federation Samoa is hosting two FIFA officials this week.

FIFA Technical Instructor and Oceania Football Confederation Referee Development Officer, Neil Poloso and FIFA fitness Instructor Kadek Touata are in Samoa to help local football officials. Some 24 local officials have registered for weeklong OFC Referee workshops at Tuana'imato. “The main objectives of this course as you know from 2016 up to now, so many rules of the game have been changed,” said Poloso.

The Football International Federation Board who was in charge of laws changed so many rules of the game, and for some reason Samoa was not in the programme in 2016.

“So this year we came here to Samoa so we can update all the rules and laws to our referees here.”

The workshop is organized by FIFA in collaboration with the Oceania Football Confederation.

The workshop started yesterday and will continue until the end of the week.

(Source: Samoa Observer)



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Public...

Continued from page 1

nation of the proposed provisions in the bill is that such changes go through the Administrative Procedures Act, which outlines the process of implementing regulations.

For example, he said, if the port director wants to make changes, it goes through public hearings.

When asked if the task force had consulted with the business community before the submission of the new port fees and charges, Port Administration director Taimalelagi Dr. Claire Poumele explained that in 2015, Port Administration had a meeting with "port users", which included local businesses that use the port.

At the time, port users were briefed on proposed changes to fees and charges that Port Administration was looking at; however, no proposed legislation was submitted at the time to the Fono, she said, adding that another meeting was held last year with port users about the same issues.

She said Port Administration shared with port users the three-levels of percentages (10%, 50% and 70%) of the proposed fees, as well as estimated revenues to be collected for each percentage level.

Therefore, she said, Port did meet with the private sector - referring to the port users - and their input on fees and charges was gathered at the time.

Taimalelagi shared with lawmakers that under local statute, there are port fees that the governor has the authority to change, and there are port fees that require Fono review and approval.

She said the Port Administration director alone does not make a decision on fees and charges, it's public input through port users, through discussions, and a reached agreement.

Taimalelagi agreed with lawmakers that it's not appropriate, not does it sound right, to give the director the authority to set fees and charges. She reminded them that all monies collected on fees and charges go to the general fund.

Some committee members had inquired about how much revenue ASG collects from port fees and charges.

ASG Treasurer Uelinitone Tonumaipea insists that it's "always around \$2.5 - \$2.6 million."

However, in the ASG Task Force presentation to Fono leaders and some lawmakers this past July, and again to the Chamber of Commerce in August, they said current collection on fees and charges is \$4.55 million and the proposed hike is estimated to collect \$7.11 million.

Data included in Gov. Lolo Matalasi Moliga's letter to the Fono regarding the FY 2018 budget shows that estimates approved under the FY 2017 budget was \$3.8 million, while \$3.5 million is proposed in FY 2018.

It was clear from comments made by some lawmakers during the House hearing, that there are serious concerns regarding the public - the consumers - carrying the burden of the proposed fees and charges, which will be passed on by the shipper to the vendor, and ultimately, to the customer.

Rep. Veevalu Meauta L. Mageo said the proposed fees, as well as the current excise taxes, will be "passed on to the consumer," and the hike in fees, as well as the proposed sales tax, will further increase the cost of living, while wage levels remains the same.

He believes the ones who'll be impacted the most by all these revenue measures are low income earners, and questioned if the task force had looked at the cost of living, and compared it to current wages, when deliberating on the proposed hikes in taxes, fees, and charges.

Ve'evalu, along with other lawmakers, agree that the proposed revenue measures would help the government in going forward, but there are so many revenue bills being put through

all at the same time for approval by the Fono and thus poses the question about what happens to the people, the consumer, who are the ones that'll end up paying for it.

The Pago Pago lawmaker believes it's not fair to propose all these taxes while there is no increase in wages - referring to ASG workers - whom he says are still facing a freeze on their annual increments.

Commerce director Keniseli Lafaele, a member of the task force, said they conducted an analysis, and to lessen the burden on the public, they moved to repeal the 2% wage tax - returning this money back to wage earners.

Ve'evalu quickly responded, "but the task force is also proposing a 7% sales tax", which is much higher than the wage tax. (Provisions of the sales tax would repeal the wage tax)

Rep. Timusa Tini Lam Yuen recalled the government's proposal more than a year ago to hike business license fees from \$25 to \$150 but the latest Commerce Department quarterly report shows a drop in the issu-

(Continued on page 9)

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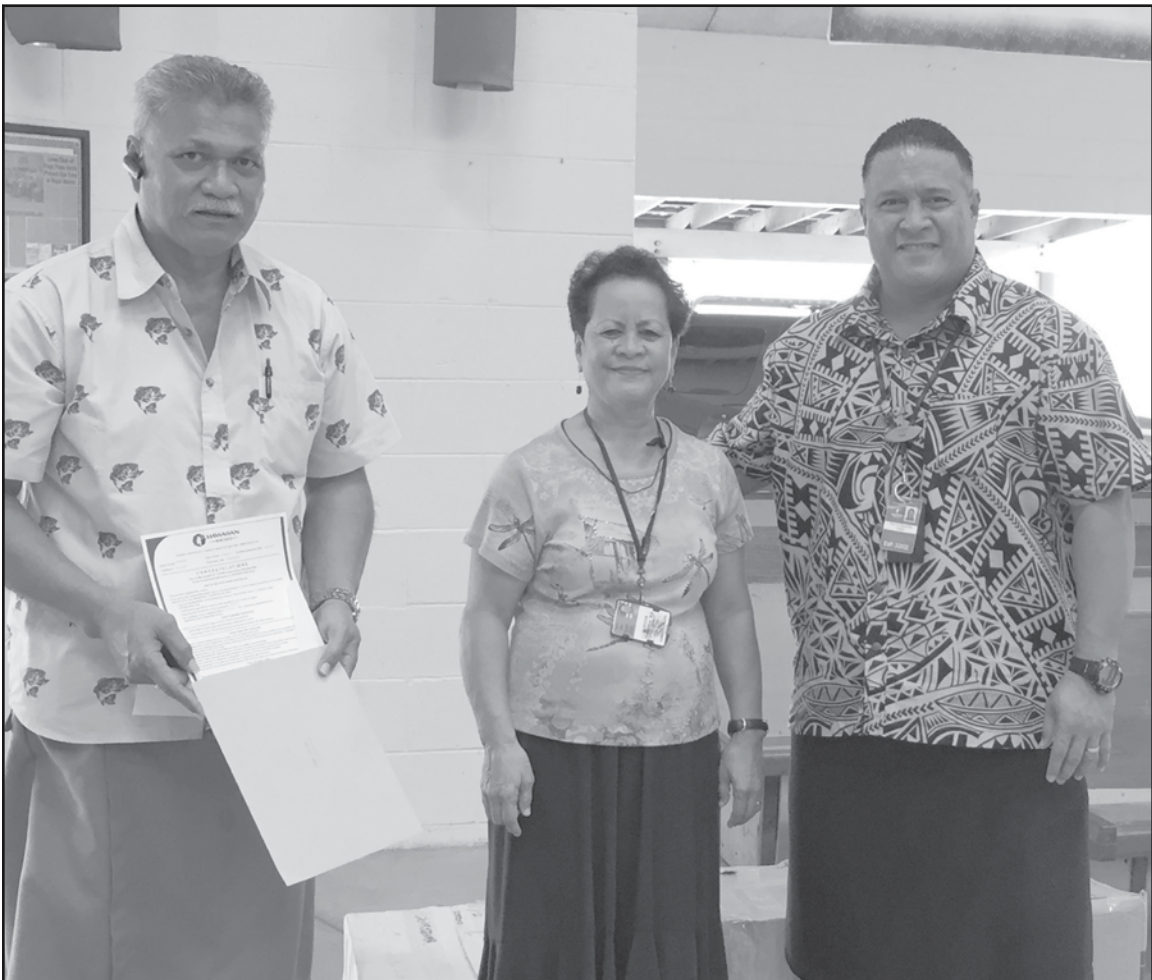
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Hope House board chairman Ta'afano Joe Tavale (left) accepted Hawaiian Airlines' generous donation of 2 round-trip tickets to Hawaii, for Hope House's 30th Jubilee raffle set for later this year. The donation was made last week by local Hawaiian Air station manager, Tuli Fruean (right) and Hawaiian Air official Sia Passi-Burgos (center)

[photo: Hope House]

Chinese imprisoned for 2 years after teaching about Islam

BEIJING (AP) — A member of a Muslim minority group has been sentenced to two years in a Chinese prison after forming online discussions groups to teach about Islam.

Huang Shike was arrested in 2016 in Xinjiang province, three months after he formed a discussion group about Muslim worship on the messaging app WeChat, according to the official website China Judgments Online. Huang, 49, taught about the Quran, Islam's holy book, in another WeChat discussion group. More than 100 people were members of each group, the website said.

The discussion groups “disturbed normal religious activity” and violated laws about using the internet to discuss religion, the website said.

Chinese authorities have dramatically increased surveillance and police patrols in Xinjiang, fearing the spread of militant Islam which they believe has infiltrated the region from Central Asia.

Huang is a member of the Hui minority. There are more than 20 million Muslims in China, mainly among Uighur, Hui and other ethnic minorities. China's 10.6 million Hui — descendants of Muslim settlers and Chinese who converted to Islam — have long endured strained relations with the Han, who constitute more than 90 percent of China's 1.37 billion people.

Chinese officials have increasingly urged local governments to better assimilate Muslim minorities into Han Chinese culture, as many ethnic policy hard-liners have decried a trend of what they call “Arabization” among Chinese Muslims.

► Sales tax...

Continued from page 2

suggestions.

Rep. Faimealelei Anthony Fu'e Allen told the task force that he is one of the many lawmakers who has received letters from some local businesses regarding the sales tax, and he believes the Fono needs to be very careful in their decision.

Treasure Uelinitone Tonumaie'a said the task force worked hard to get the right number for the sales tax. “We considered every number.”

He said 3%-6% is not enough, and 8% - 9% is too high.

“So 7% is the right number for our sales tax, so we can collect the \$10 million we're looking at every month.”

Vaetasi believes the government will never meet its goal if the Fono makes any changes to the bill. He told the committee that the government is relying on the people, but at the same time, the people will benefit from what the government is doing.

Throughout the course of the hearing, when House members would ask the task force about the reasons behind all of these revenue measures that are now before the Fono, this was the answer: “it was the recommendation from the governor.”

Toeaina told the committee that if all the revenue measures before the Fono are based on recommendations from the governor, he feels it's about time for the committee to set up a hearing with the governor, so that he can provide the exact answers to the many questions the faipule are asking.



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Australians to soon post ballots in gay marriage survey

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australians begin receiving their postal ballots on legalizing gay marriage from Tuesday as a new opinion poll showed that most of those who intend to vote are in favor of marriage equality.

More than 16 million registered voters among Australia’s population of 24 million will receive ballots in the coming days requesting their opinion on whether same-sex couples should be allowed to wed.

Most same-sex marriage advocates have condemned the 122 million Australian dollar (\$98 million) postal survey as a waste of money and want the Parliament to reform the law without delay.

An Ipsos poll published in Fairfax Media newspapers on Tuesday found 65 percent of respondents said they were certain to take part in the survey.

Of those certain to post their ballot papers back, 70 percent said they would support gay marriage.

If the postal survey finds most Australians want gay marriage, the Parliament will vote by December on legislation to lift the prohibition on gay marriage. But several lawmakers have said they would vote against gay marriage regardless of public opinion.

The Ipsos poll was based on a survey of 1,400 voters between Wednesday and Saturday last week. It had a 2.6 percentage point margin of error.

The result was consistent with previous polls in recent years which have shown around two-thirds of Australians support gay marriage.

But a similar proportion also want legal protections for churches’ rights to refuse to marry same-sex couples and to teach that marriage should be between a man and woman.

Critics of the government’s approach have argued that the public should see how these rights would be protected in proposed legislation before they decide whether gay marriage should go ahead.

But the government refuses to release a draft bill until after the survey decides whether

the Parliament will consider change.

Conservative Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and center-left Labor Party opposition leader Bill Shorten are both campaigning for law reform.

But two past conservative prime ministers, Tony Abbott, who remains a government lawmaker, and John Howard, both oppose the change.

The government and opposition are negotiating on details of legislation to be passed by Parliament this week that would penalize campaigners who resort to hate speech during the two-month survey.

Labor lawmaker Penny Wong, who has children with her same-sex partner, told her party colleagues “hurtful and inaccurate” words had already been used.

“This bill won’t protect against all of the hate speech we already see. It will provide some limited protection,” Wong said.

She complains that “no” campaigners have compared children in same-sex relationship families to Australia’s so-called Stolen Generations, mixed-race children who were taken from Aboriginal mothers under now discredited government policies aimed at raising them as non-indigenous Australians.

“No” campaigners have complained that “yes” advocates threaten their opponents in an effort to suppress dissent. The traditional marriage camp point to a short-lived online petition demanding that a Sydney doctor be deregistered for appearing in a television advertisement opposing same-sex marriage. They also point to a Catholic bishop being referred to a state anti-discrimination agency over an anti-gay marriage letter he distributed in his dioceses. The discrimination complaint has since been dropped.

Turnbull, the only serving prime minister to attend the Sydney’s Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, quoted former British Prime Minister David Cameron at a weekend “yes” campaign launch in arguing that conservatives should support gay marriage.



AMERICAN SAMOA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT “PESTICIDE APPLICATOR TRAINING”

ASCC Land Grant Program will be conducting a Pesticide Applicator Safety training for those who handle farm chemicals. If you are using farm pesticides, or you are planning to use chemicals in the near future, this is a good opportunity for you to attend this important training. The training schedule is as follows:

Date: September 11-15, 2017
Time: 12:00 noon - 4:00 p.m.
Place: ASCC Land Grant Training Room

Registration is FREE. To confirm your participation for this training, please call Joyce or Helen at 699-1575/2019.

Thank You.

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“A’oa’oga mo i lā tou o lo’o fa’aaogā ina vailā’au o’ona”

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Aso: Setema 11-15, 2017
Taimi: 12:00 - 4:00 i le afiafi
Nofoaga e fai ai: Potu mo A’oa’oga, a le Vaega o Laufanua ma Atina’e a le Kolisi Tu’u Faatasi ma Alaalafaga a Amerika Samoa

‘E leai se totogi o le resitala. A fai e te fia ‘auai i lenei a’oa’oga, fa’amolemole ia fa’afeso’ota’i mai Joyce po o Helen i le telefoni 699-1575/2019.

Fa’afetai.



A mural depicting former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott during a wedding ceremony where he is both the groom and bride is displayed on a cafe wall in Sydney, Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2017. More than 16 million registered voters among Australia’s population of 24 million will receive ballots in the coming days requesting their opinion on whether same-sex couples should be allowed to wed. Abbott, who remains a government lawmaker, opposes the change. (AP Photo/Rick Rycroft)

Public...

Continued from page 7

ance of business licenses since the fees were hiked.

Rep. Toeaina Faufano Autele offered a suggestion: “Why not gradually increase port fees and charges over a 5-year period instead of imposing all of them at one time?”

Talauega acknowledged the concerns raised by lawmakers

regarding the impact the fees and taxes will have on the public, and said it was taken into serious consideration by the task force, and it wasn’t easy for them. He said the measures are now before the Fono, and lawmakers have the authority to make changes on what they deem is appropriate.



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Bangladesh slams Myanmar for 'atrocities' against Rohingya

COX'S BAZAR, Bangladesh (AP) — The Bangladeshi prime minister was traveling Tuesday to struggling refugee camps that have absorbed hundreds of thousands of Rohingya fleeing violence in Myanmar in recent weeks — a crisis she said left her speechless.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina lambasted Myanmar for "atrocities" that she said had reached a level beyond description.

"I have no words to condemn Myanmar," she told lawmakers Monday night, noting that Bangladesh had long been protesting the persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Buddhist-majority Myanmar.

Regardless, "they are sending Rohingya to Bangladesh afresh," she said, as more continued to stream across the border. "Women are being raped and tortured, children are being killed, and houses are being set on fire" in Myanmar's Rakhine state."

At least 313,000 Rohingya have arrived since Aug. 25, when Rohingya insurgents attacked police posts, prompting Myanmar's military to retaliate with what it called "clearance operations" to root out the rebels.

The crisis has drawn sharp criticism from around the world. The United States said it was deeply troubled by the violence, and Germany halted several aid projects in Myanmar in protest.

The U.N. human rights chief said violence and injustice faced by the ethnic Rohingya minority in Myanmar — where U.N. rights investigators have been barred from entry — "seems a textbook example of ethnic cleansing."

"The Myanmar government should stop pretending that the Rohingya are setting fire to their own homes and laying waste to their own villages," Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein said Monday in Geneva, calling it a "complete denial of reality."

Meanwhile, a Rohingya villager in Myanmar said security forces had arrived Monday in the village of Pa Din village, firing guns, setting new fires to homes and driving hundreds of Rohingya to flee.

"People were scared and running out of the village," the villager said, speaking on condition of anonymity out of fear for his safety.

Myanmar police disputed that, saying the houses were burned by terrorists they called Bengalis. That term is used derisively by many in Myanmar to describe the Rohingya, who they say migrated illegally from neighboring Bangladesh, though many Rohingya families have lived in Myanmar for generations.

The Bangladeshi prime min-

ister demanded that Myanmar bring the Rohingya back, while the country's parliament on Monday night urged the U.N. and other countries to pressure Myanmar to ensure their safety and citizenship once they returned.

"We don't understand why successive Myanmar regimes carried out such atrocities on a particular community when the country is comprised of different groups," Hasina said.

Bangladesh said it would free 2,000 acres (810 hectares) of land for a new camp in Cox's Bazar district, to help shelter newly arrived Rohingya. The government was also fingerprinting and registering new arrivals.

Two pre-existing Rohingya camps were already beyond capacity. Other new arrivals were staying in schools, or huddling in makeshift settlements with no toilets along roadsides and in open fields.

Basic resources were scarce, including food, clean water and medical aid.

Hasina was expected to visit the Kutupalong refugee camp in Cox's Bazar district on Tuesday. The U.N. refugee agency also said it expected new relief supplies for 20,000 people to arrive by air during the day. Aid agencies have been overwhelmed by the influx of Rohingya, many of whom are arriving hungry and traumatized after walking days through jungles or being packed into rickety wooden boats in search of safety in Bangladesh.

Many tell similar stories — of Myanmar soldiers firing indiscriminately on their villages, burning their homes and warning them to leave or to die. Some say they were attacked by Buddhist mobs.

In the last two weeks, the government hospital in Cox's Bazar has been overwhelmed by Rohingya patients, with 80 arriving in the last two weeks suffering gunshot wounds as well as bad infections.

At least three have been wounded in land mine blasts, and dozens have drowned when boats capsized during sea crossings. Myanmar's authorities said more than a week ago that some 400 Rohingya — mostly insurgents — had died in clashes with troops, but it has offered no updated death toll since.

Rohingya have faced decades of discrimination and persecution in Myanmar and are denied citizenship despite centuries-olds roots in the Rakhine region.

Before Aug. 25, Bangladesh had already been housing more than 100,000 Rohingya who arrived after bloody anti-Muslim rioting in 2012 or amid earlier persecution drives in Myanmar.



A Rohingya man stretches his arms out for food distributed by local volunteers, with bags of puffed rice stuffed into his vest at Kutupalong, Bangladesh, Saturday, Sept. 9, 2017. With Rohingya refugees still flooding across the border from Myanmar, those packed into camps and makeshift settlements in Bangladesh are becoming desperate for scant basic resources and dwindling supplies. Fights are erupting over food and water. Women and children are tapping on car windows or tugging at the clothes of passing reporters while rubbing their bellies and begging for food.

(AP Photo/Bernat Armangué)

Battered Florida tries to assess scope of Irma's destruction

MIAMI (AP) — Aid rushed in to hurricane-scarred Florida early Tuesday, residents began to dig out, and officials slowly pieced together the scope of Irma's vicious path of destruction across the peninsula.

Even as glimmers of hope emerged from parts of the state forecasters once worried would be razed by the storm, the fate of the Florida Keys, where Irma rumbled through with Category 4 muscle, remained largely a question mark. Communication and access were cut and authorities dangled only vague assessments of ruinous impact.

"It's devastating," Florida Gov. Rick Scott said after emerging from a Monday fly-over of the Keys.

A Navy aircraft carrier was due to anchor off Key West to help in search-and-rescue efforts. Drinking water supplies in the Keys were cut off, fuel was running low and all three hospitals in the island chain were shuttered. The governor described overturned mobile homes, washed-ashore boats and rampant flood damage.

A stunning 13 million people, two-thirds of the third-largest state's residents, plodded on in the tropical heat without electricity, and nearly every corner of Florida felt Irma's power. In a parting blow to the state before pushing on to Georgia and beyond, the storm caused record flooding in and around Jacksonville, causing untold damage and prompting dozens of rescues. It also spread misery into Georgia and South Carolina as it moved inland with winds at 50 mph, causing flooding and power outages.

Six deaths in Florida have been blamed on Irma, along with three in Georgia and one in South Carolina. At least 35 people were killed in the Caribbean.

More than 180,000 people huddled in shelters in the Sunshine State and officials warned it could take weeks for electricity to be restored to everyone.

"How are we going to survive from here?" asked Gwen Bush, who waded through thigh-deep floodwaters outside her central Florida home to reach National Guard rescuers and get a ride to a shelter. "What's going to happen now? I just don't know."

The governor said it was way too early to put a dollar estimate on the damage.

During its march up Florida's west coast, Irma swamped homes, uprooted trees, flooded streets, snapped miles of power lines and toppled construction cranes.

Around the Tampa-St. Petersburg area, where Irma rolled through early Monday, damage appeared modest. And

the governor said damage on the southwest coast, including in Naples and Fort Myers, was not as bad as feared. In the Keys, though, he said "there is devastation."

"It's horrible, what we saw," Scott said. "I know for our entire state, especially the Keys, it's going to be a long road."

He said the Navy dispatched the USS Iwo Jima, USS New York and the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln to help with relief efforts.

Emergency managers in the islands declared Monday "the Keys are not open for business" and warned that there was no fuel, electricity, running water or cell service and that supplies were low and anxiety high.

"HELP IS ON THE WAY," they promised on Facebook.



A sailboat washed ashore at Watson Island in the Hurricane Irma aftermath Monday, Sept. 11, 2017 in Miami. (David Santiago/Miami Herald via AP)



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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

RFP: Financial and Single Audit Services for 2017-2019
Approved issuance by: Ruth Matagi-Faatili, President.
Date of issuance: August 16, 2017
Date & Time Due: September 15, 2017
No later than 2:00 pm local time

DBAS requests proposals for financial audits and the related single audits for a period of three years, beginning with the audit of fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2019. Fiscal and calendar years are coincident at DBAS.

Document: Requests for proposal packet outlining requirements will be available for pick up at DBAS on Friday August 18, 2017 or emailing charmaine@dbas.as for information regarding the RFP. It can also be accessed through the DBAS website: www.dbas.as (click public notice)

The Request for Proposals (RFP) describes the specifications for the services to be provided in sufficient details to permit competition and allow the interested party to properly respond to the RFP.

This RFP is issued under Title 28, Chapter 1, of the *American Samoa Code Annotated*.

DBAS invites the submission of proposals to include pricing and other details as indicated in the specifications. Attachments will be provided as an aid in presenting a comprehensive proposal consistent with the requirements of DBAS.

DBAS will select a contractor who best meets the needs of DBAS. The factors for selection will include, but not be limited to the following: understanding of the requirements of the financial and single auditors; verifiable ability to perform well; good reputation; flexibility, including ability to respond quickly to needs of a small client in a remote location and throughout the year; and reasonability of costs.

The proposals will be reviewed by a committee consisting of representatives from DBAS management and board. The committee may request interviews with potential contractors after reviewing the proposals before the final selection is made.

Submission: Proposals must be received by DBAS no later than 2:00pm local time on September 15, 2017. They may be mailed or hand delivered in a sealed envelope to:

Development Bank of American Samoa
PO BOX 9
Attention: Charmaine Faleaana
Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799

They may also be emailed to charmaine@dbas.as, as an attachment in Word Format with a confirming email required to confirm receipt; or faxed to DBAS at (684) 633-1163 with a confirming fax to confirm receipt. The original is to follow by airmail first class.



Slender Man case on trial; girl's mental state at issue

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — A Wisconsin teenager accused of stabbing a classmate in order to please a fictional horror character known as Slender Man goes on trial Tuesday, with a jury to decide whether she was mentally competent at the time.

Anissa Weier and a co-defendant, Morgan Geyser, were just 12 at the time of the attack at a park in suburban Milwaukee in 2014. The third girl, also 12, survived her wounds.

Twelve jurors and four alternates were chosen Monday, and opening statements were scheduled Tuesday. Weier, now 15, has admitted a role in the stabbing but pleaded not guilty due to mental illness.

A plea agreement calls for her to be committed to a mental hospital for at least three years if she's judged to have been mentally ill; if not, she faces 10 years or more in prison.

Prosecutors allege that Weier and Geyser lured Payton Leutner into a Waukesha park in May 2014 and stabbed her 19 times. The girls have said it was an effort to please Slender Man and become his servants, or to keep the character from

attacking their families.

A passing bicyclist found Leutner, and Weier and Geyser were captured later that day.

Prosecutors charged both girls with being a party to attempted first-degree intentional homicide. Weier struck a deal with prosecutors in August in which she pleaded guilty to being a party to attempted second-degree intentional homicide, essentially acknowledging she committed all the elements of the offense. But she also has pleaded not guilty due to mental illness, meaning she believes she isn't responsible for her actions.

Weier told a judge during her plea hearing in August that she believed Slender Man would attack her and her family if she didn't kill Leutner. Psychologists have testified that she suffered from persistent depression and a delusional disorder linked to schizotypy, a diminished ability to separate reality from fantasy.

At least 10 of the 12 jurors must agree on a verdict.

Geyser has pleaded not guilty to being a party to first-degree attempted homicide.

Anissa Weier talks to a sheriff's deputy during a pause in jury selection in the trial to determine 15-year-old Weier's competency at Waukesha County Courthouse Monday, Sept 11, 2017, in Waukesha, Wis. Prosecutors allege that Weier and her friend, Morgan Geyser, lured classmate Payton Leutner into a Waukesha park in May 2014 and stabbed her 19 times. The girls have said it was an effort to please a fictional horror character known as Slender Man. (AP Photo/Morry Gash, Pool)



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