

## **DISCLAIMER**

This Report provides a brief of the Proceedings of Parliament on **Thursday 7 March 2024**. While all efforts have been made to provide an informative brief, this information must not be relied upon as an alternative to the official Hansard record of proceedings of Parliament. If you have any specific questions about the Proceedings of Parliament on **Thursday 7 March 2024**, you should consult the official Hansard or seek assistance from the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

**Day 3  
9:37am**

### **I. Government Orders of the Day- Reading of Bills**

#### **i. Electoral Amendment Bill 2024 – debate on second reading (cont.) Day 3**

##### **i. Tofa LENATAI Victor Faafoi Tamapua, Member for Vaimauga 2**

The Member greeted Parliament and all of Samoa listening in, paying special mention to his constituency. He then acknowledged the Minister and the Office of the Electoral Commission on their efforts and ongoing works to improve their services, specifically the system and electoral roll in preparation for the upcoming 2026 General Elections.

He then noted his full support for the re-registration of voters to update the electoral roll. He asserted that his understanding is that once the Bill is officially passed, the old electoral roll and system will cease to exist; thus the need for the implementation of the mass re-registration process.

Tofa LENATAI raised concern given that there is no provision in the Bill that includes and protects the Member's name/seat before the Old System becomes obsolete. Therefore, the Member advised the Minister whether it is possible to start the registration process with the Members of Parliament before it is rolled out to the public. Furthermore, the Member requested that a user-friendly system be used to ensure the process is simplified and easy to navigate and use.

The Member also requested for a set Criteria on the requirements for re-registration be included in the Bill to help Members and the public(voters) understand what is required of them. He then queried the verification process used for the online registration system with regards to how the ‘residency’ for these voters will be determined, given that the provisions of the principal act requires that the individual cast their vote at their place of residence. Another concern expressed by the Member was the possibility of the system experiencing a crash due to viruses and such attacks.

**ii. Afioga Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Stowers Ah Kau, Member for Gagaifomauga 1**

The Hon. Member greeted the House and Samoa in all its honorific salutations, she acknowledged the Minister and Cabinet for the Bill at hand. She stressed that any change implemented for the good of the nation is important and encourages members to support any change that will be beneficial for the people. In addition, the Member emphasized that with any change comes challenges but she is confident that God never forsakes Samoa that is founded on Him. She asserted that she will not re-state other matters which have already been raised by previous Members however her major concern is the timeframe of conducting this re-registration process for the next 18 months, commencing in April 2024 to October 2025. The Hon member provided a scenario during the US Electronic voting which was supposedly hacked, and urged the Minister and Office to think ahead and consider all possible solutions to solve these problems. She reasserted the importance of having sufficient timeframe to ensure all necessary information and supporting documents are verified and secured.

- **Tofa Hon. LEATINUU Wayne Soialo, Minister of Public Enterprise**

The Hon Minister clarified on the matter of individuals who have just received a Matai Title and wish to register there is an Act that handles this matter.

**Afioga Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Stowers Ah Kau, Member for Gagaifomauga 1**

The Hon Member acknowledged the Minister for his response however the Member clarified she was only discussing on the implications of these matters raised by Members and to consider the public tuning in on proceedings to help them understand more on the Bill. The Member emphasized that all concerns regarding them returning as a Members of Parliament during the next parliamentary term as a result of the New Electoral System is not a problem to her as their seats belongs to the Public and their constituencies, they are but custodians and not owners of these seats.

- **Tofa Hon OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai, Minister of Works, Transport and Infrastructure – Interjection**

The Hon Minister corrected the Member that these matters are theirs along with the people as they are representatives of their constituencies.

- **Mr. Speaker – Point of Order:**

Mr. Speaker advised the Member who is also a senior member to structure her speech within the allocated time as her constituency is listening to parliamentary proceedings.

**Afioga Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Stowers Ah Kau, Member for Gagaifomauga 1 (cont.)**

The Hon Member clarified that she was merely stating that as elected Members we are here to represent our constituencies and are not here for ourselves.

- **Tofa Hon. TUUU Anasii Leota, Member for Siumu**

The Hon member asserted that he believes the Member for Gagaifomauga 1 is directing her statements to him, as he was the one who mentioned this in pre-sitting.

**Afioga Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Stowers Ah Kau, Member for Gagaifomauga 1 (cont.)**

The Hon Member clarified that she holds in high regard the integrity of Members thus she did not mention any names during her speech.

- iii. **Afioga Hon LOAU Solamalemalo Keneti Sio, Member for Sagaga 1**

The Member greeted her fellow Parliamentarians present in Chamber as well as heads of Government Ministries/Corporations in the House. He acknowledged Samoa in all its honorific salutations and our neighbouring countries. The Member expressed his support for the Bill as he believes this is the only way forward given the system is obsolete necessitating a new system for smooth facilitation of the country's elections. In addition, the Member highlighted that he supports the Government's intention to table more bills in the future on how the System will be implemented and operated. He believes that any intention to improve and enhance our processes is pertinent for the effective processing of Elections.

- iv. **Afioga Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell, Member for Satupaitea**

The member greeted the House and conveyed apologies for wearing the wrong attire today. He addressed his constituency and thanked them for their support and then reiterated on his opinion made during the pre-sitting; whereby he strongly supported the changes, especially the shift in using technologies to conduct the Office works. The member explained that his concern is towards the time-frame that this project is to be executed. He believes that although the intentions are positive, specifically the cleaning of the rolls, however timing is his main concern. Hon LAUTAFI mentioned that there will be economic/financial implications not only with the Office in conducting this work but also on the voters who would have to travel to Samoa to complete their biometrics data and then plan another trip during elections to cast their votes.

- **Tofa Hon LEATINUU Wayne Soialo, Minister for Public Enterprises**

The Minister corrected the Member for Satupaitea with his opinion regarding the bill that was discussed in Pre-sitting as it does not provide for online voting rather the process to implement online registration. The Hon Minister then clarified on the issue regarding the switch from the old system to the new system.

- **Mr. Speaker – Point of Order**

Mr Speaker reminded the Member on his advice yesterday to refrain from raising issues made by other Members but to focus on the Bill at hand.

**Afioga Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell, Member for Satupaitea (cont.)**

The member expressed his support for the Bill based on its intentions and objectives, however after hearing several responses and clarifications from certain Ministers insinuating that other amendments will follow, he is concerned that these further amendments will not impact the Bill deliberated.

Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly were set aside at 10.45am  
and resumed at 11:24am

**Afioga Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell, Member for Satupaitea (cont.)**

The Member emphasized the importance of the Online System thus, he advised the OEC to thoroughly consider the implementation of the system once passed and ensure its smooth operation. In addition, the Member noted that the System must be sustainable to prevent future complexities as currently experienced by the Office. Moreover, the Member stressed the importance of having an able and qualified staff to deal with the operation of the System to ensure the smooth registration of people both locally and internationally. The Member suggested whether it is possible to install these Systems at each Constituency's Fono Faavae Office for easier access and convenience, instead of having to come in the OEC Office. This will also avoid over-crowding at the Office.

Hon LAUTAFI further added that this project takes time and requires supporting resources such as infrastructure, places to use for registration in respective villages, transportation and other things. He then touched on the new system and the possibilities of being under attack from hackers especially during the General election. Furthermore, the Member queried whether there was any similarities between the new OEC System being proposed and the system used to store the National ID. The Member highlighted that from his own understanding all information in the National ID will feed into the Electoral Office database for all voters. He then requested for further clarification by the relevant Minister. In conclusion the Member recommends the Office as a way forward to carry out regular check-ups of the System so that it can be repaired and maintained regularly and avoid the current issue faced by Office.

**v. Afioga FAAGASEALII Sapoia Feafiai, Member for Aleipata Itupa i Lalo**

Afioga FAAGASEALII greeted all members in Chamber and Samoa tuning in to Parliament Proceeding. She acknowledged Samoa in all its honorific salutations then spoke on the Bill. In regards to the terms of the System being proposed, the Member highlighted the importance of conducting a trial test first before it is rolled out to the Public. Thus, she requested to the Minister, whether it was feasible to facilitate a trial for the Online System so that the Office can get feedback for its improvement. In addition, the Member supports the cleansing of the Registration Rolls as she highlights the importance of ensuring accurate information of all voters

are recorded as this will also help ensure the maintenance of the additional ‘Women Seat’ in Parliament, specifically from the 10% quota. She then concluded by conveying her support for the Bill.

**vi. Afioga MAGELE Sekati Fiaui, Member for Faasaleleaga 2**

The member greeted the House and Samoa in all her honorific salutations, also addressed his constituency then wanted to clarify to his constituency that he did not misuse any funds from their 1million initiative. In addition, he noted that there are still funds available for the Constituency’s development in areas like education. He acknowledged the patience and dedication of their Fono Faavae Committee.

The Member emphasized on the importance of implementing the new system as proposed by the Government given that the old one has become obsolete thus it is a dead end, and there is no way we can achieve what we want if we continue to use the old System. He recommends the Office that they must consider ways to create a system with a longer life span to avoid the current issue experienced. Moreover, the Member acknowledged the IT Office for their efforts in trying to develop a new system asserting that it is not an easy task. Furthermore, he encouraged the Government and Parliament to have faith in the process as he believes that the timeframe proposed by the Office to create and implement the system is more than enough before the 2026 General Election. Lastly, the Member noted that we will never improve if we do not accept changes. The Member queried whether the Government will use the SNBH system for this new invention acting as a robust firewall to prevent possible issues.

**vii. Tofa MANULELEUA Paletasala T Tovale, Member for Faleata 1**

The Member greeted all Members of Parliament in Chamber and Samoa tuning in to Parliament Proceedings. He commended the Minister and the Office for proposing the Bill stating that this is an important development for his constituency in terms of renewing the Roll, allowing other people of his constituency who could not transfer elsewhere in the previous elections to vote. In addition the Member highlighted the importance of cleansing the Registration Roll to avoid issues such as double-voting under their family members who have passed away or have moved overseas. The Member stressed the importance of cleaning the Registration Roll to ensure a free and fair Elections.

**Mr. Speaker – Point of Order**

Mr. Speaker again reminded Members, specifically the Member for Faleata 1 that he already advised the House to avoid straying off topic but to focus on the Bill at hand.

**Tofa MANULELEUA Paletasala T Tovale, Member for Faleata 1 (cont.)**

The Member raised concern regarding thoughts that Members of Parliament are responsible for assisting their voters with their registration, he believes this is over-stepping the law which leads to court cases after Elections. He highlighted that it is up to people if they want to vote or not, members should not force them to register.

**Tofa Hon OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai, Minister of Works, Transport and Infrastructure – Interjection:**

The Hon. Minister reminded the Associate Minister that the Bill at hand is specifically about the development of a new System thus, he should focus on that instead of talking about the Registration Roll and other matters not relevant to the System.

**Tofa MANULELEUA Paletasala T Tovale, Member for Faleata 1 (cont.)**

The Member concluded by expressing his support for the Bill as it proposes for a new system, given that the old system is outdated.

**viii. Afioga AGASEATA Valelio Tanuvasa Peto, Member for Aana Alofi 2**

The Member greeted the House and Samoa in all its honorific salutations. He expressed his support for the Bill based on two important aspects he noted, paying emphasis on the registration process.

1. The Member highlighted the importance of the new System in terms of re-registering accurate details for all voters. For instance, updating accurate and recent information of all voters especially in cases where people registered before marriage, and once married they have changed their last names. Therefore, it is important to consider these changes ensuring that the current information of voters is stored and used by the Office during elections.

2. Online Registration

Moreover, the Member supports the Bill as it paves the way for overseas people who also contribute in numerous ways to register for Elections.

- **Afioga SULAMANIA Fetaiai Tauiliili Tuivasa, Member for Vaimauga 1**

The Member clarified that there was always a chance for our overseas people to vote during past elections, however, the only change now is that there is an online system for registration.

- **Tofa Hon LEATINUU Wayne Soialo, Minister for Public Enterprises:**

The Hon Minister clarified to the Member for Vaimauga 1 that although registrations were open for overseas people, however it was only to a limited selection of people like those with Government Posts and Students studying overseas.

- **Afioga SULAMANIA Fetaiai Tauiliili Tuivasa, Member for Vaimauga 1**

The Member mentioned that the point he would like to stress is that there was always a chance for our citizens living abroad to vote in Samoa, it was never rejected in our previous election.

- **Mr. Speaker:**

He advised the Member that the responsible Minister for the Bill will provide further insight on the matter in due time.

**Afioga AGASEATA Valelio Tanuvasa Peto, Member for Aana Alofi 2**

The Member touched on the importance of the systems' security to ensure that voters information are safe. Thus, advised the Minister and Office to thoroughly consider this.

**ix. Tofa FESOLAI Apulu Tusiupu Tuigamala, Member for Aana Alofi 1**

The Member greeted all members of Parliament, Samoa listening in locally and overseas, he acknowledged the Head of State, Council of Deputies, and all clergies from different denominations. He then expressed support for the Bill as he believes that this is a way forward for the country and although there will be challenges along the way, he encourages the Minister and Office that the advises offered by members of the House will help the facilitation of the System. The Member advised the Minister and Government to thoroughly consider the preparation of the Bill in all its entirety to avoid any possible issues during elections, as well as giving the Opposition a reason to laugh when the system fails.

**Afioga Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell, Member for Satupaitea:**

The Hon Member wanted to clarify to the Member for Aana Alofi 1 that whatever happens with the New System will affect all Parliamentarians, it is not something that the opposition will be happy with or take it as a downfall of the Government; it is Parliament's hope that all plans will go well and be executed smoothly.

**x. Tofa FOISALA Lilo Tuu Ioane, Member for Gagaifomauga 2**

The Member greeted the House and Samoa with all its honorific salutations. He then commended the Minister and Office for preparing the Bill. Firstly, he supports the intentions of the Bill, specifically in reference to the cleansing of the electoral roll as he noticed that his constituency's roll still consisted names of those who have passed away. In addition, the Member requested to the Minister whether it is possible to have an outreach program and Registration Services offered by the Office for every Village. He believes that not all Fono Faavae Committees have people with the relevant skills and abilities to conduct registration through the Online System. Moreover, the Member advised whether it is possible to permit only 45years and older to register from overseas as a trial to avoid rising complexities. Lastly, the Member commended the Office IT staff for their efforts in developing the Online System, he acknowledges their bravery.

**xi. Afioga MAIAVA Fuimaono Tito Asafo, Member for Falealili 2**

The Member commended the Minister and Office for proposing the amendment to the Electoral Act and stated that he believes this is a necessary change that should have been implemented years ago. The Member supports the cleansing of the electoral rolls to ensure all data are updated as well as, he approves the registration of our overseas people via the online system. In addition, the Member encouraged the Office to be strong and be prepared to face any challenges they may encounter with the development of this new System. Moreover, he advised his constituency that the Fono Faavae and the Office is always available if they need further assistance during the implementation phase of the mass-registration project.

**xii. Afioga TAGALOATELE Pasi Poloa, Member for Sagaga 4**

The Member greeted the House and Samoa in all its honorific salutations, then expressed his concerns with cleansing of the electoral roll specifically for his Constituency as he might lose some of his voters. Jested that despite this, he is confident he will return after the next general election considering his relationship with his constituency. In addition, the Member requested to the Minister whether it is possible to use voters' information from their National ID for the Registration Roll to avoid the hassle of trying to recollect information from the public in such a short amount of time. In fact, he recommended whether it is possible to change the timeframe of closing the Registration Roll 6 months before the General Election so that there is sufficient time for the System to be developed and implemented in all its entirety.

Lastly, the Member requested the possibility of allowing overseas registrations for people who were born in Samoa only on a trial basis, before extending it to other Samoan people. This is considering that there are more Samoans living overseas compared to people living in the country.

**xiii. Afioga FALEOMAVAEGA Titimaea Tafua, Member for Aleipata Itupa i Lalo**

The Member greeted the House and Samoa listening in to Parliament Proceedings, he then highlighted the importance of the Bill at hand although he believes that most of the provisions derive from the Principal act. For instance, permitting registration of our people from overseas has always been in the Principal Act. However, the only change now with the Bill is the provision of the process and the inclusion of biometrics. In addition, the Member requested the Office to conduct community outreach programs in terms of Registration. This is taking into account our customs and traditions in terms of people residing in Apia on freehold land but continue to serve their rural villages where they have customary land. The member advised the Minister to consider the Faa-Samoa to avoid any complexities and issues that may arise between the Bill and our culture. Lastly, the Member advised the Office that the Fono Faavae Committees are always available to assist with the facilitation of the New System.



**xiv. Afioga Auaapaau Mulipola Aloitafua Mulipola, Member for Aiga i le Tai & Deputy Speaker**

The Member greeted the House and Samoa then touched on two important aspects of the Bill, that is the Electoral Roll and The Online System; he asserted that all he requires is the accuracy in preparation of the rolls. The Member commended the Minister and OEC for suggesting a new Electoral System given that the old one has become obsolete. In terms of developing new Electoral Rolls, the Member advised the Minister to consider removing people who have passed away and people who live in the constituency but do not have origins from that area. Furthermore, he asked to allow overseas people to register online as recognition of their contribution to the country through remittances. Moreover, the member recommends the Minister to consider offering Biometrics for free to people from overseas or if possible have them conduct biometrics from overseas, so it is more convenient and less costly with the travelling costs.

Proceedings adjourned at 1:05pm and will reconvene at 9:30am Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024.