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## **Governor Lemanu Fights for the 25 Students to Attend the Hawaii National Army Guard Youth Challenge Program**



Through the relentless efforts of Governor Lemanu, all 25 students from American Samoa attending the Hawaii National Army Guard Youth Challenge Program in Honolulu, Hawaii will be allowed to stay in the program despite not being U.S. citizens. After intervention by Governor Lemanu, the United States Department of Defense (DoD) reversed its decision and issued a Memorandum for the Director of Kalaeloa Youth Challenge Academy- Hawaii “to allow U.S. nationals from American Samoa to participate in the Youth Challenge program. This exemption allows the Kalaeloa Youth Challenge Academy to accept applications from U.S. nationals from American Samoa if otherwise qualified, as outlined in Section 3.3. of DoD Instruction 1025.08.” The decision to remove our children from the Program was made by the DoD because they claimed that the program is limited to U.S. citizens only. The Hawaii National Army Guard Youth Challenge Program is a pathway program funded by the U.S. Department of Defense to allow at-risk youth to earn a GED and learn other important life skills.

The 11 students who were forced to return home this Monday will be given the opportunity to return to the Hawaii Program next Monday, February 20th. Governor Lemanu secured their return tickets through negotiations with the Hawaii Army National Guard.

Although we are pleased with the reversal, this decision by the DoD highlights the constant discrimination that our people who are U.S. nationals and faithful Americans face under the U.S. system. Governor Lemanu vows to highlight and fight this treatment of our people under federal programs.

Parents who sent their teenage children to the Hawaii Program did so willingly without any involvement or encouragement from the American Samoa Government. These parents voluntarily pulled their children out of American Samoa Government (ASG) high schools (including one private school) and sent them to Hawaii to attend the program.

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