

HAWAIIAN HOMESTEADS

# Leases for future lots set for awarding

DHHL will assign advance rights to 665 house lots in Kapolei

By Andrew Gomes  
agomes@staradvertiser.com

More than 650 Native Hawaiian households are slated to receive advance homestead leases today for as-yet-undeveloped house lots in Kapolei.

The state Department of Hawaiian Home Lands intends to award 665 “undivided interest” leases this morning for future house lots in the agency’s Ka’uluo-kaha’i and Kaupē’a communities.

The event at the Salvation Army Kroc Center represents the first time DHHL has awarded such leases since the 2000s.

Awarding what are

sometimes referred to as “paper leases” is in part intended to allow awardees to prepare themselves financially to become homeowners. Such leases also can be transferred to a successor who would not qualify to receive a lease directly from DHHL, because of blood quantum requirements, if the awardee dies before an actual lot lease is issued.

Under DHHL rules,

beneficiaries must be at least half Hawaiian and can pass on a homestead lease to an approved successor who is at least a quarter Hawaiian.

At least 2,100 DHHL beneficiaries have died while on the agency’s waitlist. The agency has a recent waitlist of 29,543 applicants seeking homesteads. Under the program, beneficiaries receive a homestead lease for \$1 a

year but must buy or build their own home.

DHHL Director Kali Watson said in 2024 that he intended to issue nearly 3,700 paper leases at numerous envisioned homestead projects, including some with uncertain funding prospects and development timetables.

During a state House of Representatives briefing in January 2024, Watson said undivided interest award

recipients can look at model homes for an existing phase and see house lots on plans that they might like.

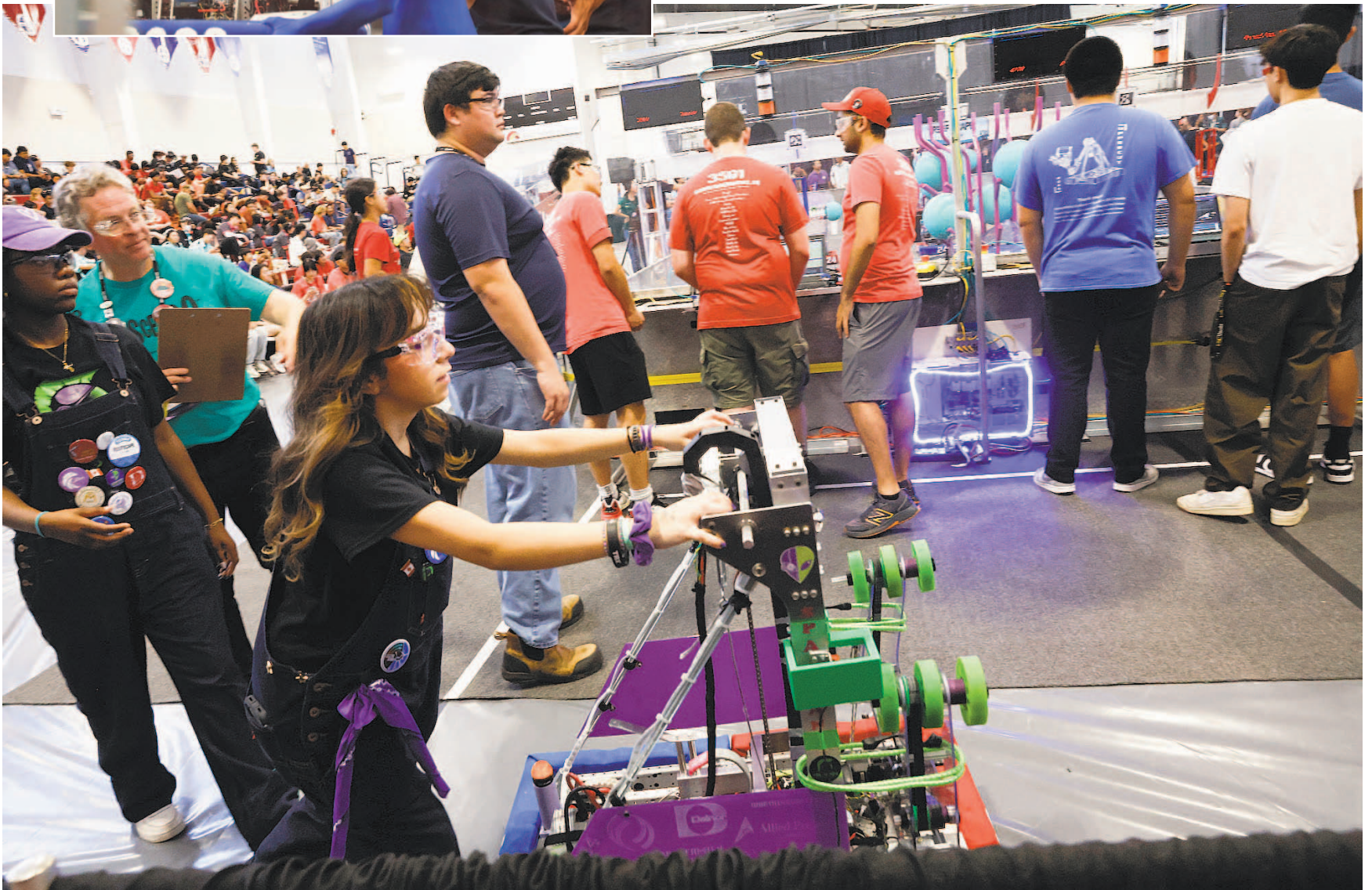
“They also can have the assurance that they’ll have a lease, and should the unfortunate situation arise (of a paper leaseholder dying), they at least have an opportunity for the successor to take over,” he said.

Please see DHHL, A9



## Building a better mind through competition

The 2025 First Robotics regional competition began Friday at Saint Louis School. Thirty-three high school robotics teams — from nearly every island, California, Iowa, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan and Canada — engaged in science, technology, engineering and mathematics as they participated in practice matches. This year’s theme, “REEF-SCAPE,” has teams using their STEM and collaboration skills to explore life beneath the surface of the ocean. Competition runs through Sunday. At left, Punahou School students Alan Mitchell, left, and Nick Williams donned blue wigs Friday while working on their robot. Below, a robot was moved onto the competition floor.



PHOTOS BY JAMM AQUINO / JAQUINO@STARADVERTISER.COM

## Case details state’s loss from ‘heartless’ dismantling of DOE

Star-Advertiser staff

U.S. Rep. Ed Case lashed out at President Donald Trump’s executive order Thursday to dismantle the federal Department of Education as “shortsighted and heartless,” and the Hawaii Democrat detailed what Hawaii schools and students stand to lose.

“Our federal government has been an integral part of our commitment since the earliest years of our country, and the USDOE, as a stand-alone cabinet-level department appropriate to its importance, has been the law of our land since 1980,” Case said in a statement. “Its dismantling, and the real underlying purpose to eliminate any federal funding for education, would cause severe harm on a broad scale that would have lasting effects not

just immediately but for generations.”

He called the Republican’s president’s move “one of the broadest and deepest and outright shortsighted and heartless of many attacks on the foundations of our society to date.”

In signing his executive order Thursday at the White House, Trump said, “We’re going to be returning education, very simply, back to the states where it belongs.”

Trump has said he wants Education Secretary Linda McMahon to put herself out of a job. “We’re going to shut it down and shut it down as quickly as possible,” Trump said. “It’s doing us no good.”

At the event, Trump suggested the matter could ultimately land before Congress in a vote to do away with the department



COURTESY PHOTO

Ed Case

entirely. Though Republicans control both chambers of Congress, Democratic support would be required to achieve the needed 60 votes in the Senate for such a bill to pass.

Case said after the order was signed: “If the President wants to come to Congress to discuss and debate real improvements to the USDOE, realignments including reductions to the USDOE’s mission and transfers of responsibility to state and local governments and communities in an ordered way, changes in

Please see CASE, A9

## Child abuse lawsuit filed against state over 10-year-old girl’s death

By Leila Fujimori  
lfujimori@staradvertiser.com

A lawsuit has been filed on behalf of the estate of Geanna Bradley against four adults living in the Wahiawa house where the 10-year-old girl was found dead from years of abuse and starvation, and against the state of Hawaii, including the Department of Human Services and its employees.

The civil complaint alleges DHS social worker Deborah Yoshizumi downplayed the allegations of abuse made in 2015 by Bradley’s biological father, Gerime Bradley, against Thomas Blas Sr. and Brandy Blas, shortly after Geanna Bradley had been placed by DHS, specifically by Yoshizumi, into their foster care.

Although Yoshizumi is not a named defendant in Cummings v. Blas et al., the lawsuit details her alleged involvement.

The father related to

Yoshizumi in 2015 that his daughter, then about 3 years old, told him that the Blases were beating her, mostly for toileting issues, according to the complaint filed March 11 in the Oahu Circuit Court by Nicole Cummings, the appointed personal representative of Bradley’s estate.

“Yoshizumi downplayed the allegations, reassured G.M.B.’s father that the Blases were known to Yoshizumi, dissuaded G.M.B.’s father from making a formal report, and never logged or otherwise documented what was happening to G.M.B.,” the complaint says.

Randall Rosenberg, an attorney for Cummings, said the reason the Child Welfare Services’ social worker was not named as a defendant was because a judge in another case dismissed the individual state employee because it was “duplicative” of naming the state of Hawaii as a defendant.

“We are doing more research and may name her as a defendant later,” he said.

Yoshizumi did not respond to calls for comment from the Honolulu Star-Advertiser.

The Blases and Debra Geron and William Geron Sr., the parents of Brandy Blas, are named defendants in the civil complaint.

The Blases and Debra Geron were indicted Feb. 14, 2024, on charges of second-degree murder, kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, conspiracy to commit kidnapping and conspiracy to commit unlawful imprisonment, endangering the welfare of a child, hindering prosecution and persistent nonsupport, related to Bradley and an adopted boy also living in the home.

The defendants have pleaded not guilty to all charges.

William Geron is expected to be called as a witness,




Please see LAWSUIT, A9

# businessreport

## LOCAL MUTUAL FUNDS

Fund	Ticker	Nav	Buy	Chg
Bishop St. Hawaii Municipal Bond Fund	BHIAIX	\$9.86	\$10.18	-\$0.01
Hawaii Tax-Free Trust	HULAX	\$10.47	\$10.54	\$0.00
Pacific Cap. Tax-Free Securities	PTXFX	\$9.58	\$9.58	\$0.00
Pacific Cap. Sh./Intrm. Tax-Free	PTFSX	\$9.69	\$9.69	\$0.00

## WALL STREET ROUNDUP

DOW JONES	S&P 500	NASDAQ
		
<b>32.03 (0.08%)</b>	<b>4.67 (0.08%)</b>	<b>92.42 (0.52%)</b>
Close 41,985.35	Close 5,667.56	Close 17,784.05

# Dow, S&P end flat; Nasdaq snaps 4-week decline

By Chuck Mikolajczak  
Reuters

**NEW YORK >>** The S&P and Dow eked out slight gains Friday, erasing earlier losses after comments from President Donald Trump provided hope that previously announced tariffs expected to begin in early April might not be as burdensome as feared.

Trump said there will be flexibility on tariffs and that his top trade chief plans to speak with his Chinese counterpart next week. The president also reiterated his plan to use duties as a way to narrow the U.S. trade deficit with China.

Markets have been under pressure in recent weeks as changing announcements about the timing and size of tariffs have clouded the

outlook for corporate profits as well as the Federal Reserve's monetary policy path.

Stocks have shown some signs of bottoming this week, however, with the S&P climbing more than 1% Wednesday in the wake of the Fed's latest policy announcement. The central bank kept rates unchanged and signaled two cuts were likely this year.

Even so, Michael Arone, chief investment strategist for the U.S. SPDR Business at State Street Global Advisors in Boston, said it was concerning that investors' attempts to rally the stock market had largely failed.

"The reasons are the continued uncertainty around trade policy from the Trump administration, continued concerns about a U.S.

economic growth scare and ultimately, uncertainty about what the path of monetary policy looks like," Arone said.

Chicago Federal Reserve President Austan Goolsbee said the central bank needs more time to "sort through" how Trump's policies play out in the economy, while New York Fed President John Williams echoed Goolsbee's comments and said there was no rush to change monetary policy right now.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 32.03 points, or 0.08%, to 41,985.35; the S&P 500 gained 4.67 points, or 0.08%, to 5,667.56; and the Nasdaq Composite gained 92.42 points, or 0.52%, to 17,784.05.

The S&P was down as much as 1.06% earlier in the day.

For the week, the S&P 500 gained 0.5%, the Nasdaq rose 0.17% and the Dow climbed 1.2%. It was the largest weekly gain for the Dow in two months, while the Nasdaq and S&P 500 managed to barely snap four-week streaks of declines.

With earnings season set to begin in April, multiple companies have been reducing their forecasts. FedEx slumped 6.45% after the package delivery company cut its full-year profit and revenue forecasts, citing continued weakness and uncertainty in the U.S. industrial economy.

Peer UPS declined 1.61%. Delivery firms are often seen as a bellwether for the global economy given their reach into a wide swath of different industries.

The delivery companies weighed on the Dow Jones Transport Index, which dropped as much as 2.7% during the session before closing down only 0.2%.

Nike slid 5.46% as the worst performer among Dow Industrial components after the sports apparel maker projected a sharper decline in fourth-quarter revenue than analysts had anticipated.

The materials sector, off 1% on the session, was weighed down by a 5.78% tumble in shares of Nucor Corp. after the company forecast first-quarter profit below estimates.

Boeing climbed 3.06% after Trump awarded the planemaker a contract to build the Air Force's most sophisticated fighter jet, beating out rival Lockheed

Martin, which slumped 5.79%.

Friday's session also marked the simultaneous expiry of quarterly derivatives contracts tied to stocks, index options and futures, also known as "triple witching," which can exacerbate market volatility.

Declining issues outnumbered advancers by a 1.93-to-1 ratio on the New York Stock Exchange and by a 1.42-to-1 ratio on Nasdaq.

The S&P 500 posted nine new 52-week highs and 16 new lows, while the Nasdaq Composite recorded 38 new highs and 188 new lows.

Volume on U.S. exchanges was 21.05 billion shares, compared with the 16.47 billion average for the full session over the past 20 trading days, and the busiest trading day since Jan. 7.



## DHHL

Continued from A7

Receiving paper leases, however, comes with some uncertainty over when a lot lease will follow.

In one prior big push that involved awarding 1,434 undivided interest leases in 2005 and 2006, about half of the paper leases had not been converted to homestead leases with beneficiaries

moved into new homes 16 years later.

At today's event DHHL plans to award 605 paper leases for Ka'uluokaha'i and 60 for Kaupe'a.

DHHL received \$600 million from the Legislature in 2022 to accelerate homestead lot development, and the agency indicated earlier this year that it intends to use \$141 million to produce 450 lots at Ka'uluokaha'i. A second phase with 250 lots is projected to cost another

\$68 million and is subject to DHHL acquiring additional funding.

DHHL also plans to use \$22 million of its 2022 appropriation to develop 60 lots next to its existing Kaupe'a subdivision, using \$8 million to buy land for the additional phase and \$14 million to develop the 60 lots.

Overall, DHHL anticipates being able to produce 2,180 lots with its \$600 million appropriation, and seeks more funding from the Legislature this year.

## CASE

Continued from A7

federal funding, or any other aspect of federal efforts in education throughout our country, that would be a debate well worth having.

"But, like many other of his actions, their real intent is not to improve in a responsible manner but to destroy irresponsibly and in many cases unconstitutionally and illegally, and that should not be acceptable to any citizen."

In a news release, Case listed myriad services that DOE funding supports in Hawaii, where there are more than 178,000 K-12 public schoolchildren, and thousands more who rely on student loans and grants for post-high school education. He said those benefits include:

- >> \$72 million for Title I schools, which serve over 104,000 students, to guarantee every public school receives adequate funding and students have what they need to get ahead.

- >> \$50 million to support students in military families or on Native American reservations.

- >> \$55 million for 20,000 children who receive help like speech services, reading support or other assistance to get to appropriate grade levels, to ensure accessibility for students with disabilities.

- >> \$7 million to ensure that schools are safe and teach life skills through programs like career counseling.

- >> \$6.5 million for before- and after-school programs to support working parents



**Education, especially our collective centuries-old commitment to a free education for all, is one of the most basic building blocks of our success as a country."**

Ed Case  
U.S. representative

and for clubs and sports for children.

- >> \$3.3 million to support students learning English.

- >> \$5 billion in federal student loans, supporting over 123,000 Hawaii residents pursuing education beyond a high school diploma.

- >> \$81 million in Pell grants, ensuring over 16,000 students can pursue a college degree regardless of income status.

- >> \$13 million for career and technical education, including pathways to jobs through apprenticeship programs in traditional trades or STEM careers.

"Education, especially our collective centuries-old commitment to a free education for all, is one of the most basic building blocks of our success as a country," Case said. "It is a core part of the American Dream, the great equalizer of our society, providing all with the building blocks of success as well as the shared experience of our democracy."

## LAWSUIT

Continued from A7

and has maintained his silence on the matter.

Trial in the criminal case is set for Sept. 8.

The complaint alleges DHS should have known Thomas Blas Sr. had a criminal history, including felony convictions in 2010 and 2005 for unauthorized entry into a motor vehicle and a 2005 felony assault.

It also alleges DHS should have known the Blases and the Gerons were ineligible as caregivers because they had substantial debt and were the subject of collection efforts during the periods DHS placed Bradley in their care.

The Blases received \$1,961 a month from the state for Bradley's care, the complaint says.

The complaint says the misconduct of DHS amounts to breaching its duties, obligations and responsibilities to the child, and alleges DHS was negligent, grossly negligent and



Geanna Bradley



Brandy Blas



Thomas Blas Sr.

COURTESY PHOTOS

acted recklessly, with disregard for her rights and safety, and caused or contributed to her pain and suffering, loss of enjoyment of life and wrongful death.

DHS declined to respond to the allegations, following its policy not to comment on ongoing litigation, and would not say whether Yoshizumi remains employed with DHS.

Sometime in late 2016 or in 2017, Gerime Bradley voluntarily terminated his parental rights based on the understanding Geanna Bradley would be adopted by her paternal aunt in Houston.

Bradley was relocated to Texas in 2017, but "for reasons that are not yet clear," she was brought back to Hawaii in October 2017, after a few months in Texas, and returned to the Blases' foster care, the complaint says.

The Blases were awarded legal guardianship of Bradley in 2018. Then in 2022, when she was about 9 years old, they removed her from school "under the guise she was to be home-schooled," the lawsuit says.

The complaint mirrors the indictment's allegations, that the 10-year-old was found Jan. 10, 2024, at 33 Karsten Drive, duct-taped

around her eyes and torso so that her arms were strapped to her sides, starved, significantly injured and bruised. A portion of her nose was missing, with no sign she was ever given medical treatment for it.

Bradley slept in a small box and was forced to use a bucket for a toilet, as evidenced by text messages between Brandy Blas and her mother, police said.

The Medical Examiner's Office found she died of blunt force injuries caused by assault, starvation, prolonged immobilization and physical restraint, medical neglect and pneumonia.



COURTESY PHOTO

**Ed Case, right, met with his constituents Jan. 31 for a talk-story event at Washington Middle School.**