### Myth 1
Only five women are allowed to hold seats in Parliament.

**Truth**
Women may be elected in the normal process to Parliament and may well exceed the five-seat quota prescribed by the amendment.

### Myth 2
Women who hold the additional seats are not real members of parliament.

**Truth**
Women who hold additional seats after being sworn in have the same status in Parliament as other members who are elected through the normal process.

### Myth 3
Women who hold the additional seats will never be considered for a cabinet portfolio.

**Truth**
The Prime Minister has sole authority on the selection of his/her cabinet members and women who are elected through the constitutional amendment have the same chance as any other member of parliament who belongs to the party.

### Myth 4
The amendment makes it impossible for two women from the same constituency to be in parliament at the same time.

**Truth**
If a woman is elected to parliament in the normal process and there is a vacant additional seat, it is possible for a second woman from the same constituency to be selected through the activation of the amendment if she polls the next highest number of votes.

### Myth 5
The constitutional amendment was passed to enable five additional seats for parliament.

**Truth**
The constitutional amendment is to ensure that 10% of the seats in the Samoa Parliament are held by women.

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What does the Constitutional Amendment mean?

<table>
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<th>Number of women elected in the normal process</th>
<th>Amendment is activated</th>
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Only women can hold an additional seat in parliament.

Frequently asked questions

How is the Constitutional Amendment activated?
By taking the prescribed women candidates with the ‘highest number’ of votes in the election.

What is the meaning of ‘highest number’ of votes?
This means the percentage of the total valid votes in a constituency polled by a woman candidate.

What happens when two or more women candidates poll an equal number of votes and are eligible to hold one additional seat?
The woman candidate to fill the additional seat will be selected by lot before the Electoral Commissioner in the presence of the candidates, or their authorised representatives, and at least two police officers.

What happens if an additional seat becomes vacant?
This seat will then be held by the woman candidate who has the next highest number of votes in the general election.

What happens if a seat that is held by a woman elected through the normal process, and therefore one of the five seats held by women in parliament, should become vacant?
A by-election is held and if a man is elected then a woman who polls the highest vote in the by-election is also elected. If no women stand, then a woman with the next highest votes from a previous election will be elected to fill the additional seat.

Gender equality in political participation remains a challenge in Samoa. Women currently hold only three (6.1%) of the 49 seats in the national parliament. In 2014 Samoa was ranked 174 out of 188 countries in terms of the percentage of members of parliament that were women. Of the 162 candidates that contested the March 2011 parliamentary elections, only eight were women.

In 2013, the Samoa Parliament passed a constitutional amendment that introduced a 10 per cent quota of women representatives in the Legislative Assembly. The system proposes a “floating” five reserved seats for women. If less than five women are elected through the usual process, the amendment is activated to ensure that five seats are held by women in parliament.

This is seen as a significant milestone in efforts to increase the participation of women in parliament. The March 2016 elections in Samoa will be the first since the amendment.

Gender equality in political participation remains a challenge in Samoa.