



## **KA ‘AHA KENEKOA** **THE SENATE**

**KE KAPIKALA (STATE CAPITOL)**  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

### **NEWS RELEASE** **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday, September 18, 2025

## **JUDICIARY COMMITTEE HOSTS DISCUSSION ON THE EROSION OF DEMOCRATIC NORMS**

**HONOLULU** – This morning, The Hawai‘i State Senate Committee on Judiciary, chaired by **Senator Karl Rhoads** (Senate District 13 – Dowsett Highlands, Pu‘unui, Nu‘uanu, Pacific Heights, Pauoa, Punchbowl, Pālana, Liliha, Iwilei, Chinatown, and Downtown) held an informational briefing to hear from Professor Colin Moore (Ph.D. Department of Government, Harvard, 2009) about the erosion of democratic norms in the United States and how that trend is affecting and will affect the residents of the State of Hawai‘i. All opinions expressed by Professor Moore are his own.

### [Professor Colin Moore’s Presentation](#)

Moore listed authoritarian warning signs, such as rejection of democratic rules, denial of the legitimacy of opponents, and a willingness to curtail civil liberties and attack the press. He also described how the U.S. is considered by experts to be a “flawed democracy,” meaning that it holds free and fair elections and basic civil liberties but is threatened by significant weaknesses in its system.

“We’ve gained a better understanding of how the Trump Administration is testing long-standing democratic norms with insufficient push back,” said Senator Rhoads. “Professor Moore brings up significant points on the strategy of the administration and how behaviors of authoritarianism are calling into question our identity and norms.”

The Trump Administration has demonstrated how the U.S.’s democratic norms are weaker than many assumed. Threats such as attempting to fire a member of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, deploying the National Guard to Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., and pushing

the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to remove broadcast licenses to NBC and ABC are just some of the many ways the administration has tested its limits.

“There is something breaking down in the constitutional system that’s supposed to regulate itself...That is not working the way it should anymore,” said Moore. “Polarization has broken down some of those norms.”

Moore made a point to note Hawai‘i’s unique relationship with the Federal government and how, historically, our state has hosted a variety of political opinions and ranks comparatively low in polarization.

For Hawai‘i, federalism is a strength but also a vulnerability, argues Moore. “Federalism has often been thought of, and I think rightfully so, as one of the best defenses American democracy has. States can act as a check on federal overreach.”

“States do have some sovereign authority, but the federal government holds most of the cards,” said Moore.

Moore noted Hawai‘i’s important relationship with the military, federal agencies like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the tourism industry.

Moore suggested ways the legislature can prepare Hawai‘i for looming threats, including establishing reserve funds to fill in losses in health and education and supporting nonprofits that depend on federal funding.

View the original Hearing Notice [HERE](#)

Watch the video recording [HERE](#)

*This informational briefing is part of a series of informational briefings on the rule of law in relation to the recent actions of the Trump Administration and how its decisions are impacting Hawai‘i.*

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