



KA ‘AHA KENEOA

THE SENATE

KE KAPIKALA (STATE CAPITOL)
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

NEWS RELEASE **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE HEARS FROM RETIRED CHIEF JUSTICE MARK RECKTENWALD ON RULE OF LAW AND JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

HONOLULU, HAWAII – The Hawai‘i State Senate Committee on Judiciary held an informational briefing today with the Honorable Mark E. Recktenwald, retired Chief Justice of the Hawai‘i Supreme Court, to discuss the rule of law, judicial independence, and the role of the courts in maintaining the constitutional balance of government. The briefing occurred in the same week as Constitution Day, held on September 17, that commemorates the signing of the U.S. Constitution in 1787.

Chief Justice Recktenwald presented “Defending the Rule of Law” and discussed the importance of an independent judiciary and the principles that underpin the rule of law. Following his presentation, members of the committee engaged in a question-and-answer session with the retired Chief Justice.

The briefing comes amid ongoing national discussion regarding executive authority, the separation of powers, and the role of the judicial branch. The discussion provided an opportunity for legislators to examine these issues and consider the importance of maintaining public confidence in the institutions responsible for upholding the law.

“An independent judiciary is essential to our system of checks and balances and to ensure that the rule of law applies equally to everyone,” said Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair of the Senate Committee on Judiciary. “Today’s discussion was an important opportunity to step back from the immediate political moment and consider the principles that have allowed our democratic institutions to endure. We have a responsibility to understand, respect, and protect the role of an independent judiciary.”

Chief Justice Recktenwald, who retired from the Hawai'i Supreme Court in 2025, is a member of the Alliance of Former Chief Justices, a project of the nonpartisan civic organization Keep Our Republic. The Alliance brings together retired chief justices from across the country to promote constitutional principles and protect individual rights and an impartial judiciary. "These are challenging times for our nation, especially as we near this fall's elections. It is critical that people know they can trust in the courts to fairly and impartially resolve the disputes that may arise in the electoral process," Recktenwald said.

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 actions of the Trump Administration and how its decisions are impacting Hawai'i. Information about other briefings can be accessed on the Senate Judiciary Committee webpage [HERE](#).

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