

## Hawai'i State House of Representatives Update

From the Desk of District 8 Representative David Tarnas

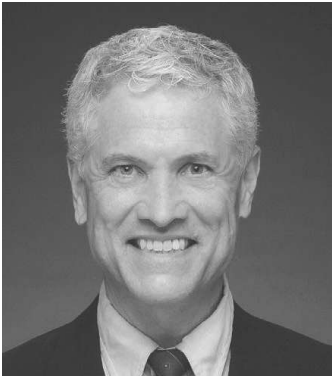


Photo courtesy of David Tarnas  
Representative David Tarnas speaks for North Kohala as a member of the Hawai'i State House of Representatives.

Aloha. The 2025 legislative session has completed its work. Thanks to everyone who submitted testimony about bills as we worked to pass effective legislation and the State Budget. As Chair of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs, I led efforts to gain approval for important legislation to support the Judiciary branch and criminal justice reform in Hawaii. Here are some highlights:

HB400 appropriates funds for the Judiciary for the 2025-2027 biennium. The bill funds two critical budget requests for the Third Circuit (Hawaii Island) including a new district court judge and support staff in Kona and a new South Kohala District Court facility in Waimea. Among many other important programs, the bill funds the Criminal Justice Research Institute and makes permanent or expands three specialty courts, including Women's Court. A related bill (HB727) establishes a temporary two-year Women's Court Pilot Program in Kona.

Four bills increase the compensation rates for professionals working in the judicial system. For many of these positions, their compensation rates have not been increased for nearly twenty years. HB396 increases compensation for court-appointed counsel in criminal proceedings. HB398 increases compensation for court-appointed

counsel and guardians ad litem in family court proceedings. SB264 increases compensation for private-sector examiners who evaluate a criminal defendant's fitness to proceed or penal responsibility in a legal case. SB428 increases fees paid to witnesses in civil and criminal trials, and increases fees paid to witnesses in civil trials for travel expenses.

Several bills were passed to improve efficiency in data sharing within law enforcement agencies, as well as the expungement and record clearance process. HB132 amends the pilot project for a state-initiated expungement process of arrest records concerning promoting a detrimental drug in the third degree to improve effectiveness. HB145 authorizes the Hawai'i Criminal Justice Data Center to transmit all expungement orders to the Judiciary to effectuate the purposes of Act 159, SLH 2023. SB1319 requires that the Attorney General's identification system include criminal cases initiated via citations that resulted in conviction, deferred acceptance of guilty or nolo contendere plea, or conditional discharge, and that a court order identification processing in such cases.

Other bills reform policing policies to better protect the police and the public. HB277 establishes requirements related to vehicular pursuit by police and requires reporting on all vehicular pursuits to the Attorney General. SB601 requires police to post notice that a warranted or warrantless search has been conducted on a property and requires a police officer to secure any entrance used in the search and requires police departments to develop a policy for securing the entrances to a venue to be searched after a search is completed. HB998 clarifies that the omission of certain information or any error in a citation does not constitute grounds for dismissal of a charge or for reversal of a conviction if the omission or error did not prejudice the defendant.

Other bills improve transparency in the criminal justice system. HB126 increases transparency and accountability surrounding property forfeiture. SB112 allows surviving family members of deceased

persons who had been under investigation by the police to receive a copy of the closing report from the police after a certain time.

Several bills make important progress to make the correctional system more focused on rehabilitation. HB1002 extends the term of the Oversight Coordinator for the Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission. SB104 reforms solitary confinement policies in Hawaii's jails and prisons. SB224 requires the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to assist inmates with obtaining civil identification cards and other identification documents within a certain time.

Numerous measures specifically focus on juvenile justice policy. SB544 requires courts to consider certain factors when sentencing a person convicted as an adult for an offense that the person committed when they were a minor. HB103 prohibits sentencing persons who were under the age of twenty-one at the time of the offense to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. SB694 prohibits minors from being held in jails, lockups, or prisons for adults, except temporarily.

Other bills make important statutory improvements. SB281 defines and prohibits the offense of torture and makes it a class A felony. HB111 authorizes civil claims to be made against a person, business, business owner, or business operator that profits from sexual exploitation or sex trafficking and extends the statute of limitations for civil claims related to sexual exploitation or sex trafficking to ten years. SB295 increases penalties imposed on individuals convicted for violations of temporary restraining orders and orders for protection.

There are many other priority bills from the Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs Committee that passed the legislature regarding elections, ethics, campaign finance reform, firearm safety, fireworks, wildfire prevention and mitigation, and more. In next month's article, I will highlight some of these bills. I am grateful to serve as your State Representative and I welcome hearing from you. Please contact me anytime at (808) 586-8510 and rep.tarnas@capitol.hawaii.gov. Mahalo!

## County Council Update

From the Desk of District 9 Councilmember James Hustace

Aloha Kohala!

Summer is quickly approaching with May Day celebrations and graduation events at every turn. It was quite special to take in the sunrise at the 5th Annual E Lei 'O Pololu, as well as catch the Kohala High School May Day performance. I will attend the upcoming graduation ceremony, wishing our high school seniors ho'omaika'i with all of you.

May is National Wildfire Awareness Month. We had a good community conversation with Hawai'i Fire Department (HFD) Chief Kazuo Todd in Waikoloa last month, where we discussed the impor-

tance of making our properties and homes fire resilient. Organizations like Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO) provide free home assessments, giving us a better sense of what we can do individually to protect our community. If you are a member of a Firewise Community, we have partnered with HWMO, HFD, and the Department of Environmental Management to allow greater use of our green waste facilities in South Kohala.

During the May 7 Council Meeting, we approved Resolution 120-25 authorizing the Department of Finance to begin negotiations for

properties identified in the 2024 Public Access, Open Space, and Natural Resource Preservation Commission (PONC) priority list. Two of the projects on this list are in North Kohala. The first is 'Upolu Point, protecting unique cultural sites and providing more connectivity for the Ala Kahakai coastal trail. The second is Nani Kai Hoku Farm, preserving space for agricultural use in perpetuity. Mahalo to the stewards and community members for your initiative to protect these significant areas. Kohala has been a beacon of guidance for applicants

## Future KMN Deadlines

It's important for the Kohala Mountain News to receive ads and news submissions by the following deadlines. Otherwise, submissions may not be accommodated.

**June Deadlines**  
Ads and News: 6/13/25  
Calendar: 6/20/25  
Distribution: 6/27/25

**July Deadlines**  
Ads and News: 7/11/25  
Calendar: 7/18/25  
Distribution: 7/25/25

*Our purpose is to enhance and strengthen the community by fostering continuous communication and understanding among the various cultures, residents and constituents.*

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**Letters to the Editor and Viewpoint articles must address issues affecting North Kohala and be accompanied by the author's name, address and telephone number. Letters and Viewpoints are subject to editing, and shorter submissions will receive preference for publication.**

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