

2022 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

REPRESENTATIVE NICOLE LOWEN

Kailua-Kona • Holualoa • Honokohau • Kalaoa



Aloha Neighbors,

With the conclusion of the 2022 legislative session, I wanted to update you on key actions taken by the legislature this year, including bills passed and budget highlights.

This year, I continued in my position as the Chair of the Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection, and was also appointed as a member to the Agriculture and Judiciary Committees.

I look forward to continuing to work for our community, and I count on your input and ideas to help me do this. Please don't hesitate to contact me any time with your questions, ideas, or comments. It is a privilege to serve you.

Mahalo nui loa,

Nicole

Rep. Nicole Lowen

Affordable Housing at the Forefront of the 2022 Legislative Session

The legislature took major steps this year to improve the affordable housing crisis and to address the needs of the native Hawaiian community. An unprecedented amount of \$1 billion in funding was allocated for the development of new affordable housing, for Department of Hawaiian Homelands lot development, for homeless housing and services, for TANF programs for needy families, and for rental and homeownership assistance programs.

\$600 million was allocated to develop **housing for beneficiaries on the DHHL waiting lists**, and for down payment and mortgage assistance for Native Hawaiians (HB 2511). The legislature appropriated \$300 million to develop **affordable rental housing** (SB 3048) and passed laws to **prohibit rental discrimination** against recipients of Section 8 vouchers (SB 206) and provide **incentives to landlords** who participate in Section 8 (HB 1752). \$15 million was appropriated to extend the **Ohana Zones** pilot program to 2026 to provide temporary and transitional housing and services to people experiencing homelessness (HB 2512). HB 1600 (the state budget) provides \$5 million in gap funding for **first-time home buyers** and \$20 million to develop **infrastructure for affordable housing**. HB 2233 provides up to \$500 per month in **rental assistance** to those in the TANF and TAONF programs, which will benefit over 4,000 working families.

Help for Working Families: Minimum Wage, the EITC, and Broadband Equity

The legislature this year voted to raise the **minimum wage** for the first time in eight years. Wages will go from \$10.10 to \$12/hour in October, and then will incrementally increase to \$18/hour in 2028. As the cost-of-living continues to rise in Hawaii, it is imperative that wages keep pace so that working families can afford to make ends meet.

The legislature also took steps to alleviate the high cost of living by making the **earned income tax credit** permanent and refundable, ensuring that the lowest-income families will get the full credit amounts that they qualify for. For House District 6, the estimated impact of this is that it will help almost two thousand families keep an extra \$450 annually, and add over \$1 million in economic activity to our community.

Internet access is an equity issue, and the legislature passed measures this year to help bridge this gap. The state budget included over \$115M to construct and deploy **broadband infrastructure** statewide. New low-income housing and public housing projects will be required to be built with broadband infrastructure for tenants to have access to broadband service (SB 2479).

Automatic Tax Rebates

The legislature passed SB 514, which will provide automatic tax rebates of up to \$300. Individuals who make less than \$100,000 per year (\$200,000 for couples) will receive a **\$300** tax rebate each. Individuals who make more than \$100,000 per year (\$200,000 for couples) will receive a **\$100** tax rebate.

Grants-in-Aid and CIP Highlights for HD6

Neighborhood Place of Kona:

\$120K for mobile family services

Innovations Public Charter

School: \$200K for campus improvements

Japanese Cultural Center of Kona:

\$250K towards land acquisition

Kona Historical Society: \$250K for

Native Forest exhibit and other programs

Project Vision: \$600K for the

Hiehie mobile hygiene program for people experiencing homelessness

Going Home Hawaii: \$250K for

reentry and rehabilitation services

Hawaii Island Humane Society:

\$250K for expansion of the Animal Community Center

Hawaii Health Systems

Corporation: \$500K for a needs and site assessment for a new hospital in North Kona

Kona Community Hospital: \$3M

for oncology center improvements and pharmacy expansion

Natural Energy Laboratory of

Hawaii Authority: \$2M towards a freshwater aquifer survey and new comprehensive EIS

Keolonahihi State Park: \$1.1M for

site improvements

West Hawaii Veteran’s Cemetery:

\$3.2M for expansion and improvements

Kealakehe Elementary: \$500K for

cooling system for cafeteria

Climate, Energy, and Environment

Energy Efficiency in State Buildings

Buildings account for more than 2/3s of electricity consumed in the State. HB 1801 was passed this year to direct the State to lead by example in implementing measures that will save energy, money, and create green jobs. This bill also requires that all new facilities be designed to maximize efficiency and use low-carbon building materials, where feasible and cost-effective.

Pathways to Decarbonization

HB 1800 establishes greenhouse gas reduction targets of 50% by 2030 over 2005 levels, in line with the Paris Agreement, and funds a comprehensive study to consider not only the electricity sector, but also transportation, aviation, land use, agriculture, workforce development, and environmental justice.

Electronic Waste (HB 1640)

Update and improves Hawaii’s existing e-waste program and establishes

recycling goals for manufacturers. This bill will provide additional funds to counties to improve collection services.

Toxic “Forever Chemicals” in Food Packaging (HB 1644)

Phases out the use of toxic PFAs and PFOAs in certain types of food packaging and firefighting foam.

Composting (SB 3004) Bolsters the market for compost by providing reimbursements to farming and landscaping operations for the use of compost.

Healthy Soils and Carbon-Smart Land Management (SB 2989)

Incentivizes farmers and foresters to manage their lands in ways that help sequester carbon.

Cesspool Conversion Grants (HB 2195)

Establishes a grant program for low- and moderate-income property owners or DHHL lessees to assist with cesspool conversions on properties that are in priority areas.

Tuesday, June 14th | 5 - 6:30p.m. | Via Zoom
VIRTUAL TALK STORY W/ REP. LOWEN
 SPECIAL GUESTS: FINANCE CHAIR SYLVIA LUKE
 & SENATOR KANUHA



Rep. Nicole Lowen



Rep. Sylvia Luke



Sen. Dru Kanuha



To register, scan the QR code
 or visit bit.ly/talkstory2022

Abandoned Vehicles

With growing complaints about abandoned vehicles (in 2019, 1,620 AVs were reported on Hawaii Island alone), several measures were passed this year to address this issue. Abandoned vehicles are an eyesore, harmful to the environment, and a financial burden on taxpayers. Bills passed this year will make it easier to locate the owners of AVs (HB 1411), increase fines (HB 1414), and require that cars be moved further distances in order to not be marked as abandoned (HB 1412).

Improving Education

- **Building Pre-K facilities:** HB 2000 provides \$200 million to develop and expand facilities to increase pre-kindergarten student capacity.
- **Air Conditioning:** SB 2862 appropriates \$10 million for the continued installation of air conditioning in public school classrooms statewide. HCR 51 requests that Hawaii Island schools that are regularly affected by vog be prioritized.
- **Menstrual Equity:** SB 2821 requires the DOE to provide menstrual products free-of-charge at public schools to help ensure equal ability to participate in school activities and to reduce absenteeism.
- **Improving Teacher Compensation:** SB 2819 fixes inequities in teacher salaries to improve teacher recruitment and retention. Funding is also included in the budget for teacher salary increases, professional development, and filling positions in Hawaiian language immersion, special education, and rural campuses.
- **Career Readiness:** SB 2826 provides \$2.6 million for high school students to participate in industry-credential programs tailored to workforce needs in Hawaii.
- **School Bus Services:** HCR 50 convenes a working group to examine statewide school bus transportation inequities and lack of services.

Health Care

- **Adult Dental:** The State Budget included funding for adult dental services for Medicaid patients.
- **Postpartum Coverage Extension:** Medicaid coverage for postpartum care was extended from 2 months to 12 months.
- **New Kona Hospital:** \$500,000 was allocated for a needs and site assessment to identify a viable location for a new hospital in North Kona.
- **Telehealth for Rural Areas:** SB 2624 implements a telehealth pilot project in medically underserved areas.
- **Youth Vaping:** HB 1570 bans the sale of flavored vapes, which entice youth to start vaping at an early age.
- **Ambulances:** \$1.2 million was allocated for four new ambulances in Hawaii County.

Supporting Coffee Farmers

This legislative session brought a renewed focus on Hawaii's coffee labeling laws. **HB 1517** was passed to fund an independent study of the economic impacts of increasing the minimum coffee blend ratios. Although we would have preferred a version of this bill that actually changed this percentage, completing a study will remove an obstacle towards accomplishing this in the future. The State budget this year also includes funds for the coffee farmer subsidy program to help coffee farmers combat coffee berry borer and coffee leaf rust.



Rep. Lowen during a committee hearing



Big Island Reps. honoring Judge Nagata



Women's Caucus members on sine die



Signing a bill to be introduced



Rep. Lowen & staff: Maile, James & Phil



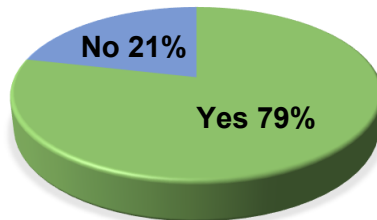
REPRESENTATIVE NICOLE LOWEN

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Honolulu, HI 96813

Mahalo to everyone who participated in our community survey! Here are the results.

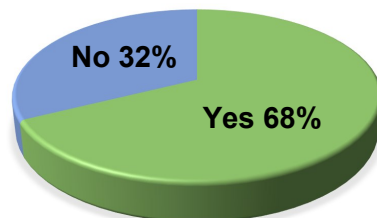
Do you support a visitor's green fee?

As travel and tourism return to our islands, we are striving for a more sustainable, managed approach to tourism. One idea is to implement a visitor green fee, where visitors are charged a fee that can be used to protect and restore Hawaii's natural resources, parks, and beaches. Although several bills were introduced this year, none passed.



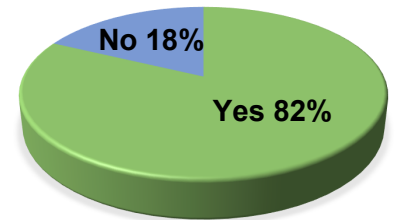
Do you support legalizing marijuana for adult recreational use?

This question has been asked multiple times in our surveys over the years, and your responses indicate growing support. In 2014, 58% supported legalization and 42% opposed it. In 2017, 66% supported legalization and 33% opposed.



Do you support banning the sale of flavored e-cigarettes ("vapes")?

A 2019 survey reported that about 36% of high school students on Hawaii Island vape regularly. Candy and fruit flavored vapes entice teens to start vaping and introduces them to nicotine at an early age. The legislature passed HB 1570 this year to ban the sale of flavored vapes and reduce the number of youth who use these products.



Should the State ban the collection of aquarium fish from our reefs for the pet industry?

The legislature did not take action on this issue this year, although commercial aquarium fish collection remains prohibited statewide pending a completed EIS. HB 1653 was passed to increase fees for violations of aquatic resource laws.

