

COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPRESENTATIVE NICOLE LOWEN

Kailua-Kona • North Kona • South Kohala



Aloha Neighbors!

I hope this message finds you well, and that you're enjoying a good start to 2023.

At the legislature, this looks to be a year of change and fresh perspectives. At the start of the new legislative session, there were sixteen brand-new members in the State House of Representatives, and the governor just appointed two more in mid-February for a total of eighteen new members. Session officially began on January 18th, and we're now in the process of considering the bills introduced in the House.

As always, please reach out to my office if you need assistance, have questions, or an idea you'd like to share!

Mahalo a nui loa,

Nicole

Rep. Nicole Lowen



@representativelowen



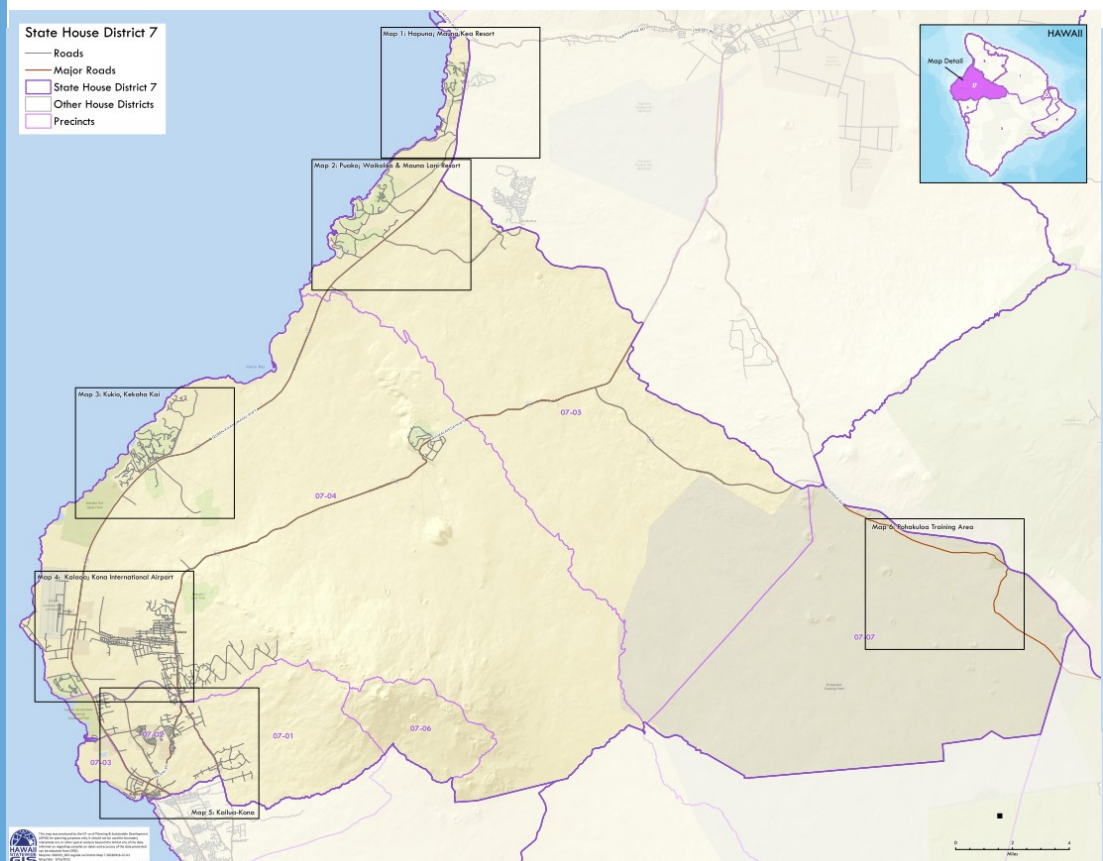
@officeofrepowen

Welcome to the New District 7!

If you received this newsletter in the mail, that means you are a resident of the new House District 7. Every ten years, when census data is updated, political boundaries at all levels of government are redrawn to account for population changes. As a result of this year's redistricting process, Hawai'i Island was given an additional House seat, for a total of eight seats. The boundaries of the seven existing districts also all moved.

It is a privilege to be representing the new District 7, which runs from the middle of Kailua-Kona town, north to Waikōloa Road, and along the coast all the way to Spencer Beach Park. Much of the new district overlaps the area I have previously represented since 2012, but there are also many new areas now in District 7. These areas include: Kaloko Mauka, Kīholo, Pu'u Anahulu, Pu'u Wa'awa'a, all the resort areas along the North Kona/South Kohala Coast, parts of Waikōloa Village that are south of Waikōloa Road, and Puakō. I look forward to representing those of you who were not previously in the old district, and continuing to work together with those who were!

See the map below for details about the new District 7 boundaries. For more detailed maps, visit <https://elections.hawaii.gov/resources/maps/election-maps/>



Update on Hāpuna Beach State Park Water Line Repairs

Hāpuna Beach State Park is one of the most heavily used parks on the Big Island, and is now part of the new District 7. Many residents of West and North Hawai‘i are extremely frustrated about the neglected condition of the beach park and the lack of running water to the public restrooms and showers. Recently, the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of State Parks addressed their plan for a long-term fix of the water lines, as well as a short-term fix to get some of the showers and bathrooms working again as soon as possible.

To provide some background, in April 2022, \$2.2 million in funds that were allocated by the Legislature (thanks to Rep. Tarnas who represented this area previously) were released by the Governor for repairs at Hāpuna. However, DLNR is still working on issuing a request for proposals so that the project can be put out to bid. In addition, engineering studies are in progress to fully understand the repeated failures of the current system. DLNR anticipates that these repairs will not be finished until the end of 2024. Fortunately, in the meantime, they will install a ground water line to act as a short term fix that will provide water to two sets of restrooms and the showers on the beach, which they expect to complete this spring.



About Representative Lowen

Representative Lowen has been a voice for West Hawai‘i in the Hawai‘i State House since 2012, when she was first elected. She moved to Kailua-Kona in 1996 to join her sister, who was living in Kona at the time. Prior to getting involved in politics, Nicole was a teacher and administrator at Hawai‘i Montessori School and also often worked a second job, as so many people in Kona do, to make ends meet. While completing graduate school at UH Mānoa on O‘ahu, Nicole also worked at the State Capitol for Rep. Denny Coffman who represented Kailua-Kona/South Kona areas, and with his encouragement, decided to run for office following that experience.

Rep. Lowen has been serving as the Chair of the Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection (EEP) since 2019, and has sat on many other committees over the years, including Water and Land, Hawaiian Affairs, Finance, and Judiciary. Currently, in addition to EEP, Nicole is a member of the Agriculture and Food Systems Committee, and the Consumer Protection and Commerce Committee, and also serves as the Co-Chair of the House Special Committee on Red Hill.

Outside of these legislative committees, Rep. Lowen is also the founder of the Environmental Legislative Caucus, serves on the Hawai‘i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission, the Hawai‘i Invasive Species Council, the Sea Grant Advisory Council, and is appointed to the US Department of Energy’s Electricity Advisory Committee. She was also recently invited to be the Co-Chair of the Council of State Government’s Western Region Committee on Energy and Environment.

Nicole has a bachelor’s degree in History from the University of Pennsylvania, and Master’s in Urban and Regional Planning and a graduate certificate in Disaster Management from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

Take Our 2023 Community Survey Online

We want to hear from you! Every year, our office seeks input on important issues in the community. Please go to bit.ly/D7Survey or scan the QR code to complete this year’s survey online. Tell us your priorities, ideas and concerns. We will personally review every response, and greatly appreciate and value your feedback as it helps Rep. Lowen to better represent District 7 at the legislature.

Mahalo for participating!



SCAN ME

Cesspool Conversion Working Group Completes Final Report

Hawai‘i has more than eighty thousand cesspools, over half of which are on Hawai‘i Island, and many in House District 7. Cesspools are an antiquated way of handling wastewater and can lead to contamination of drinking water and coastal waters, and pose one of the biggest threats to coral reefs. By law, all cesspools in Hawai‘i must be converted to alternatives by 2050. In 2018, recognizing how challenging this issue is, the Legislature passed Act 132 to create the cesspool conversion working group, tasked with looking at the scope of the issue, how to prioritize the most polluting cesspools for conversion, and to help homeowners finance costly conversions. After almost four years of meeting, the final report of the working group is complete, and includes recommendations to the State and County to help facilitate conversions. You can find the final report and links to other work products of the working group at health.hawaii.gov/wastewater/home/ccwg.

Following up on the efforts of the working group, there is proposed legislation under consideration this year to implement some of the recommendations. HB 440 was introduced to provide a tax credit for cesspool conversions, which would complement a bill passed in 2022 for a grant program for low- and moderate-income households. This bill would also ensure that during real estate transactions, buyers are made aware of the existence of a cesspool, if the property has one, and the date in law by which it must be converted. HB 181 would move up the 2050 deadline for the highest-risk cesspools to an earlier date, and HB 180 would give additional resources to the Department of Health Wastewater Branch, so that they can better fulfill their duty to help Hawai‘i’s residents convert cesspools. There are also bills to fund pilot projects in each county and to invest in workforce development. It looks to be a year of robust discussion of cesspool issues, and hopefully there will be some progress on moving forward with conversions, and cleaning up Hawai‘i’s wastewater act.

Community Engagement

Rep. Lowen's office works hard to keep constituents informed with up-to-date community information via email newsletters and social media. Our days are filled helping constituents navigate the State’s bureaucracy, collaborating on policy ideas with community members and groups, advocating for infrastructure improvement projects, and keeping the public informed about what’s happening at the legislature and in State agencies,

Over the years, Rep. Lowen has also held many talk story sessions and community forums. Since 2020, these have been held virtually, and can be watched back on Facebook at facebook.com/representativelowen. We look forward to getting back to in-person events, but will also keep using the virtual format, since this seems to be more convenient for many people. To be informed of future talk stories and other events, sign up for Rep. Lowen’s e-newsletters at mailchi.mp/capitol/replowen or by scanning the QR code on the back of this newsletter.



**Bill Signing Ceremony for
Cesspool Grant Program**



Attending the “Lead with Love” Rally



Site Visit to Waikoloa Solar Project



Visiting with West Hawaii Teachers



Renewable Energy Project Blessing



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scan



Community Resources

GENERAL CONTACTS

Aloha United Way: 211 / auw.org

Hawaii County Civil Defense: (808) 935-0031

Police Non-Emergency: (808) 935-3311

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Legal Aid Society

1 (800) 499-4302 / legalaidthawaii.org

Volunteer Legal Services Hawai'i

vlsh.org / (808) 313-8210

HOUSING

Hawai'i Public Housing Authority:

hpha.hawaii.gov

Residential Landlord-Tenant Hotline:

(808) 974-4000, ext. 62634

Hope Services: (808) 935-3050

hopeserviceshawaii.org

FOOD ASSISTANCE

The Food Basket

(808) 322-1418

hawaiifoodbasket.org