

FROM THE OFFICE OF

# SENATOR STANLEY CHANG

East Honolulu Community Newsletter

February 2026



Image Credit: Office of Senator Stanley Chang



The 2026 legislative session—our 33<sup>rd</sup> biennial—is now underway! As Housing Committee Chair, I have introduced many bills to end our housing shortage. This year I am focusing on the State's housing finance system. The Legislature has appropriated more than *\$1 billion* over the last decade to housing finance, yet most people will *never qualify* to live in the homes built, and the units are only *temporarily affordable*.

In addition, I have introduced many other bills based on your suggestions to improve the lives of our entire community. Here is more information about our priority bills:

## HOUSING PRIORITIES

- SB 2342** intends to improve the Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC) Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) by establishing a new working group. The QAP is the official rubric scoring applications for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) to build affordable housing. Unfortunately, agency staff has unaccountable discretion to award projects with low scores rather than high scores. Additionally, the current process does not adequately prioritize permanently affordable projects, those of State or county, or ones that will repay State loans as rapidly as possible.
- SB 2060** would provide HHFDC the financial flexibility to transfer funds

from the Rental Housing Revolving Fund (RHRF) to the Mixed Income Subaccount, a new fast-revolving fund established last year but not yet funded. Currently, RHRF loans have 57-year terms and as low as 0.15% interest. The new subaccount would offer 3–5 year loans, enabling construction of *ten projects for the price of one*.

## NON-HOUSING PRIORITIES

- SB 2380** would establish a continuous legislature. Currently, the Legislature meets only four months per year. It's simply not enough time to consider the *3000 bills* introduced annually, nor can members introduce bills to address situations that arise after January. The process is opaque to both the public and even the members. During my term of office, multiple conference periods have extended past their deadlines, leaving many bills to die in chaos and confusion. A year-round, continuous legislative session would greatly improve the transparency, predictability, and efficacy of the Legislature.
- SB 2199** would establish a State-owned sovereign wealth fund by allocating a portion of the State's revenues from:
  - the transient accommodations tax
  - a percentage of State budget surpluses
  - a percentage of moneys received from certain settlements or judgments in which the State is a party
  - a portion of the proceeds from the sale or other disposition of public lands.

The sovereign wealth fund would be invested with earnings distributed as cash dividends directly to qualifying State residents each year, beginning in 2030. Other such funds in the US and abroad provide direct payouts to all citizens, pay for higher education, or otherwise directly benefit all residents.

These are just a handful of many legislative priorities to improve our State. To track any bills, visit the [Hawai'i State Legislature](#).

## CALL US

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## EMAIL US

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## HANDY CONTACTS

State Pothole Hotline  
808-586-7852

City Pothole Hotline  
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State Homelessness  
[gov.homelessness@hawaii.gov](mailto:gov.homelessness@hawaii.gov)  
808-586-0193

City Homelessness  
[complaints@honolulu.gov](mailto:complaints@honolulu.gov)  
808-768-4381

Abandoned Vehicles  
808-733-2530

Building Permits  
808-768-8000

Poison Control  
800-222-1222

Trash Collection  
808-768-3200

Street Light Repair  
808-768-5300

Domestic Abuse Hotline  
800-799-7233

Public Assistance  
Information Line  
855-643-1643

## **AARP FREE SEMINAR: STOP FRAUD BEFORE IT STARTS**

As scams become more sophisticated, kūpuna across Hawai'i are increasingly being targeted by criminals using new technologies like artificial intelligence, deepfakes, and cryptocurrency. To help older adults stay informed and protected, AARP Hawai'i is hosting a free, in-person seminar focused on stopping fraud before it starts.

“Stop Fraud Before It Starts: Practical Steps to Outsmart Scammers in the Age of AI and Crypto,” will break down how modern scams work and why even smart, cautious people can be fooled. Attendees will see real examples of AI fraud, learn about cryptocurrency and why criminals prefer it, and walk away with tools such as red-flag checklists and simple refusal scripts that can be used immediately. Free continental breakfast provided.

### **EVENT DETAILS**

Date: February 23, 2026

Time: 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Location: Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i

To register, please call toll-free **(877) 926-8300** or visit [AARP Hawai'i](#)

This seminar also connects to AARP Hawai'i's broader advocacy efforts to combat fraud involving cryptocurrency ATMs. These kiosks, now numbering

more than 45,000 nationwide and 95 in Hawai'i, are increasingly being used by criminals to steal from older adults. Because they are less regulated than traditional institution ATMs, they lack basic consumer protections. In Hawai'i alone, estimated losses from crypto ATM scams reached over \$922,000 in 2024, with adults aged 60 and older accounting for more than 65% of reported losses nationwide.

AARP is supporting legislation to add safeguards such as daily transaction limits, clear fraud warnings, transparent fee disclosures, detailed receipts for investigations, and required refunds of transaction fees tied to fraud. These measures aim to make it harder for criminals to exploit these machines and easier for victims to get help.

For more information, visit [aarp.org/hi](http://aarp.org/hi).



Image Credit: AARP Honolulu

## **HAPPY LUNAR NEW YEAR! TIME TO MAKE IT A STATE HOLIDAY**

February marks the Lunar New Year, the Year of the Horse! Every year, thousands of residents in the State of Hawai'i celebrate this event, which is a cornerstone event throughout our islands.

The Lunar New Year is such a significant cultural event that I have re-introduced a bill ([SB 2220](#)) to make the Lunar New Year a State Holiday. The Lunar New Year is joyously observed by more than two-thirds of Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese Americans across the United States, including in Hawai'i. It is a time to renew one's family ties, reflect upon the past year, and wish for good fortune, health, and prosperity in the year ahead.

In 2021 and 2023, the United States House of

Representatives introduced resolutions recognizing the cultural and historical significance of the Lunar New Year. California recognized it as a state holiday in 2022, and New York recognized it as a public school holiday in 2023. By establishing the Lunar New Year as a State Holiday here in Hawai'i, we can honor its rich cultural history, demonstrate the commitment to our rich cultural diversity, and extend our best wishes for peace and prosperity to all who celebrate this important occasion.

To learn more about SB 2220, please visit the [Hawai'i State Legislature](#).



Image Credit: Office of Senator Stanley Chang

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# 2026 Senate Majority Priorities: Building a Stronger Hawai‘i

As Hawai‘i prepares for the opening of the 2026 Legislative Session, the Hawai‘i Senate Majority has outlined a comprehensive set of priorities focused on **housing affordability, resilience, and equity**. These priorities aim to protect essential services, support working families, and build a sustainable future for communities across the State. Below is an outline of the 2026 legislative priorities of the Hawai‘i Senate Majority.

## HOUSING & AFFORDABILITY

Housing remains the Senate Majority’s top priority as Hawai‘i continues to face a severe housing shortage. Lawmakers are advancing proposals to expand the supply of affordable housing by streamlining development and offering financial tools—subsidies, tax credits, general excise tax exemptions. These efforts emphasize support for workforce housing, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, and homeownership programs to help local families remain in Hawai‘i.

In addition, the Senate will work to strengthen housing agencies like the Hawai‘i Housing Finance and Development Corporation (HHFDC) and the Hawai‘i Public Housing Authority (HPHA), while improving access to homeownership assistance programs. Other initiatives include converting underutilized commercial properties into housing, modernizing landlord-tenant laws, accelerating housing production through fast-revolving funds, and providing relief for rising insurance and maintenance costs faced by condominium owners. Improved State–county coordination will also help ensure housing better serves Hawai‘i’s local workforce.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

The Senate will invest in workforce development by strengthening education-to-career pathways, and will also seek to expand career and technical education programs in addition to supporting teacher recruitment and retention. Areas of focus: emerging industries, regional economic development, and small business support to create quality jobs statewide.

## HEALTH CARE & PUBLIC SAFETY

To protect critical services, the Senate will address potential federal funding cuts impacting health care and emergency management. Priorities include expanding telehealth, supporting provider recruitment, exploring a medical residency program on Maui, and strengthening

public safety through improved recruitment, infrastructure, and emergency response capabilities.

## EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The Senate remains committed to funding education from early learning through higher education and maintaining safe, functional school facilities. Additional efforts will connect students with real-world career opportunities, strengthen teacher pipelines, improve student housing, and evaluate policies affecting University of Hawai‘i student-athletes and governance.

## FOOD SECURITY, AGRICULTURE, & ENVIRONMENT

Strengthening food security is a key focus through support for local agriculture, food banks, farm-to-school programs, and biosecurity efforts. The Senate will also promote sustainable farming practices, climate resilience strategies, water resource management reforms, and increased recycling through the HI-5 program.

## INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORTATION, & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Senate will continue investing in transportation systems, transit-oriented development, and infrastructure to enhance mobility and safety. Community support initiatives will prioritize support for houseless individuals, kūpuna, and vulnerable populations through coordinated partnerships and expanded social services.

## GOVERNMENT REFORM & OPERATIONS

Efforts to improve transparency and efficiency in government will include reviewing insurance regulation, State hiring practices, energy governance, and agency oversight. The Senate will also examine Mauna Kea stewardship responsibilities and consider policies related to naming rights for State facilities.

For more information, please visit the [Hawai‘i Senate Majority website](#).



Image Credit: Senate Majority Office

## **HAWAIIAN ELECTRIC COMPLETES CRITICAL FIRE SAFETY PROJECTS IN HAHA'IONE**

Wildfire safety is a top priority for fire prone areas. Hawaiian Electric has recently completed critical safety and reliability projects throughout the Haha'ione area in East Honolulu. These upgrades are part of a proactive effort to harden our electrical grid against extreme weather, reducing risk of wildfires.

The work included the installation of more resilient poles, advanced sensors, and equipment designed to minimize sparks. These improvements not only enhance the safety of the community but also improve day-to-day power reliability for residents. This is a part of Hawaiian Electric's broader strategy to prevent and mitigate fire hazards.

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has approved Hawaiian Electric's expanded Wildfire Safety Strategy—deploying new technology, fortifying infrastructure, minimizing fire hazards and expanding community partnerships to significantly reduce the risk of a wildfire started by utility equipment.

"We appreciate the PUC's thorough review and approval of this comprehensive plan for the safety of our communities," said Jim Alberts, Hawaiian Electric senior vice president and chief operations officer. This work is already underway, and we're working with many government agencies and community partners who are all focused on doing their parts to address the ongoing risk of wildfires."

The wildfire safety strategy approved by the PUC identifies key initiatives including:

- Ongoing grid hardening, asset inspections and vegetation management focused on areas with medium to high risk of ignition
- Installing more weather stations, hazard-detection cameras, creating a wildfire-focused Watch Office and implementation of an operational wildfire risk model to inform real-time decision making and management of the company's Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) program
- Ongoing community and stakeholder engagement

For more information about Hawaiian Electric's fire safety strategy, please visit [Hawaiian Electric](#).



Image Credit: Department of Land and Natural Resources

## **YOU MAY QUALIFY FOR FREE IRS TAX PREPARATION SERVICES**

If your household income does not exceed \$80,000, you may qualify for free tax filing assistance. As the 2026 tax deadline approaches, we want to make sure every constituent knows that free, professional tax preparation services are available. For many individuals and families, the cost of filing taxes can be a financial burden, but trusted community

resources can help you file accurately while keeping more of your hard-earned refund.

**Hawai'i Tax Help** connects eligible tax filers to free, IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) services. VITA offers free tax preparation assistance through IRS-certified volunteers at locations across the State. These volunteers help low- to moderate-income residents prepare and file their taxes. They also ensure that tax filers receive all eligible credits, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC), a benefit that can return thousands of dollars to qualifying households.

