



MidWeek

This column by Senator Michelle Kidani was published in the MidWeek **Central VOICE** section on Wednesday, February 24, 2016.

Legislative session proceeding

At this point in mid-February, we lawmakers have completed about a third of the 2016 legislative session. Bills that are still under active consideration have been sent to second committees for additional testimony and debate. The Senate and House budget committees continue to review state agency requests for funding as they weigh high priority needs against available resources.

As Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, my goal is to guide proposed legislation through the process that will focus those resources most effectively to the benefit of teachers and their students. Good teachers who nurture student success in their daily work inspire us to be creative in our approaches to lawmaking.

Several education bills recently passed out include SB 2586, the Hawaii State Teacher's Omnibus bill, as well as individual bills that address portions of this bill. Those bills call for universal "whole child" education to include visual and performing arts and Hawaiian studies (SB 2587); additional support for special education teachers and students (SB 2589 and SB 2593); provision of vocational and technical education classes (SB 2589); funding for pre-kindergarten education (SB 2595); air conditioning in our classrooms (SB 2590); and changes to policies regarding student testing and teacher evaluations.

A proposed 1 percent General Excise Tax increase for education (SB 2599) is not likely to pass out of either the Senate or House, but it is an effort to note the plight of inadequate funding for our students and teachers.

It's interesting to note that in more recent years, the budget of the Department of Human Services has surpassed the education budget and will continue to do so because our *kupuna* are living longer and also deserve funding for quality of life in their later years. SB 2478, a bill proposing a half-percent G.E.T. increase for a long term care program, is also on its way to the Senate's Committee on Ways and Means that is formulating the state budget.



**Supporting
Hawaii's
teachers -
State Capitol
Rally, Friday,
February 5**

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Congratulations, Micah Andrade!

Here's a student success story about Micah Andrade, a Mililani High School student enrolled in teacher Amy Perusso's Advanced Placement government class. Micah was recognized this month as one of five winners of an essay contest conducted among both public and private schools statewide by the Hawaii State Bar Association. Students were asked to write about how the work of the late Hawaii Congresswoman Patsy Mink inspires them. For his essay, Micah and other winners each received a \$500 prize that they can use for college studies. Micah's proud mom and sister were on hand for the awards ceremony at the Hawaii Judiciary History Center at Ali'Iolani Hale, the historic building in the civic center behind the Kamehameha Statue. Other winners were from Maui and Kauai High Schools, Leilehua High, and Kamehameha-Kapalama. Good work, everyone!

Essay contest winner - Mililani High School junior Micah Andrade. With Micah (from left) in the Hawaii Supreme Court Chambers is his AP Government teacher Amy Perruso, his sister Gabriella and proud mom Monica.



Weekend fun

I'm proud to note that all public schools in the Mililani Complex have adopted programs in the nationwide Character Counts program that teaches students about the importance of behaving in a fair and responsible way when they interact with everyone in their schools, their families and their neighborhoods.

This Saturday, I'll be joining students from all of those schools at Mililani Town Center for the 9th Annual Character Counts Celebration. The event will include entertainment, games and information booths with lots of opportunities to learn about the successes of Character Counts. Stop by if you can between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. for a truly inspiring experience. See you there!



9th Annual

Character Counts! Celebration

