



STATE OF HAWAII
CAMPAIGN SPENDING COMMISSION

235 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET, ROOM 300
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

January 27, 2025

TO: The Honorable David A. Tarnas, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

The Honorable Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

FROM: Kristin Izumi-Nitao, Executive Director 
Campaign Spending Commission

SUBJECT: **Testimony on H.B. No. 372, Relating to Campaign Contributions.**

Tuesday, January 28, 2025
2:00 p.m., Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.¹ The Campaign Spending Commission ("Commission") supports this bill.

In 2022, the Legislature enacted a ban on elected officials holding fundraisers during any regular or special session of the state Legislature. Hawaii Revised Statutes ("HRS") §11-342(c). This measure seeks to close a loophole in the law by amending HRS §11-357 to ban elected officials from also soliciting or accepting campaign contributions during the same time period. It is common for elected officials to receive contributions outside of any formal fundraising event. This bill will prevent the corruption, or at least the appearance of corruption, of elected officials.

The Commission requests that this committee pass this measure.

¹ The companion bill is S.B. No. 258.



House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Strongly Supports: HB372 Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at 2:00pm; Conference Room 325

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

HAPA strongly supports HB372, which prohibits state and county elected officials from soliciting and accepting campaign contributions during any regular or special session of the state legislature, including any extension of any regular or special session or any legislative recess day, holiday, or weekend.

Public opinion strongly backs campaign finance reform. A 2022 Data for Progress poll found that 74% of Hawai'i voters support measures to limit campaign contributions. This widespread support demonstrates the public's desire for clearer rules around political fundraising.

Campaign spending data reveals significant disparities in Hawaii's electoral landscape. Incumbents in the Hawaii House spend an average of \$57,883 per election, compared to just \$16,500 for challengers. This funding gap creates an uneven playing field that undermines fair political competition.

HB372's impact becomes clear when examining re-election rates. Over the past decade, 90% of incumbents have won re-election. While experience matters, this high rate suggests that current fundraising practices may unfairly advantage sitting politicians.

Recent corruption cases further highlight the need for this legislation. Two state lawmakers pleaded guilty to bribery, exposing vulnerabilities in the current campaign finance system. This bill provides a direct response to these ethical breaches.

Other states have successfully implemented similar restrictions. Alaska, Florida, and Tennessee prohibit fundraising during legislative sessions. These laws have helped restore public trust in government and created clearer ethical boundaries.

We urge you to support HB372 to ensure that there is a separation from legislative work and fundraising, therefore legislators focus on serving constituents when they need to be.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Anne Frederick, Executive Director

HB-372

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 8:30:55 AM

Testimony for JHA on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judge Daniel Foley (ret.)	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments: Dear Mr. Chairman and members of the Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs Committee, As former chair of the Commission to improve Standards of Conduct, I submit this testimony in support of HB 372 Relating to Campaign Contributions. The Commission proposed this bill to "reduce the negative perception of legislators soliciting or accepting contributions from individuals or organizations that have an interest in matters pending before the Legislature during a session." Commission December 1, 2022 Report at page 32. Passage of HB 372 would help restore public trust in the legislative process. Mahlo, Judge Daniel Foley (ret.)

HB-372

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 10:23:46 AM

Testimony for JHA on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
lynne matusow	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

While I support the intent of this bill, you need to treat the legislature differently from the counties. The county councils meet year round. There is no comprehensible reason, except being lazy, to prohibit campaign contributions for the county officials when the legislature is in session. You are comparing apples with split peas. They are two different entities.

HB-372

Submitted on: 1/26/2025 5:02:53 PM

Testimony for JHA on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ruth Robison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

I am a voter who lives in Hilo. I am testifying in support of HB 372 RELATING TO CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS.

This bill is one of many that grew out of the House Commission to Improve Standards of Conduct. The overarching goal of that commission is to restore the public's faith in our state government by discouraging the "pay to play" political culture that led to criminal convictions of corrupt legislators.

This bill moves us toward that goal by prohibiting "state and county elected officials from soliciting and accepting campaign contributions during any regular session or special session of the state legislature."

I urge you to pass HB 372 RELATING TO CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS and help to discourage the "pay to play" political culture in Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Thank you for your service to the people of Hawai'i.

HB-372

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 9:45:21 AM

Testimony for JHA on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Debra M Javar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully SUPPORT HB372

I believe this will help decrease the political corruption.

Mahalo

Debra M Javar

Kona, HI

HB-372

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 10:04:43 AM

Testimony for JHA on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sulara James	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill.

Mahalo, Sulara

HB-372

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 10:09:23 AM

Testimony for JHA on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glenn Choy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. Legislators, support democracy, not the lobbyists

HB-372

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 10:57:30 AM

Testimony for JHA on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I strongly support bills like this to help level the playing field of campaign donations. I also would like to see additional transparency and a requirement for who is doing the campaigning, as dark money has become problematic in our elections and could put our elections at risk to be influenced by outsiders. I do feel that soliciting funds during a legislative session should be prohibited, as it can make the legislator beholden to the dictates of whomever is giving money to them while they are in the capacity of making laws that will affect all of us. Mahalo.

HB-372

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 5:06:37 PM

Testimony for JHA on 1/28/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Jakubowski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 772, which seeks to close the loophole allowing candidates to donate to each other's campaigns through the purchase of fundraising tickets. This legislation is a crucial step toward fostering fairness and transparency in Hawaii's electoral process.

By addressing this loophole, HB 772 ensures that campaign funds are used solely for their intended purpose—engaging and communicating with voters—rather than creating a system of mutual financial support among candidates. This change will help prevent the appearance of impropriety and maintain public trust in our democratic system.

Moreover, closing this loophole reinforces the principle that elections should be won through merit and the ability to connect with constituents, not through financial exchanges among candidates. It levels the playing field, particularly for grassroots candidates who may not benefit from connections with elected establishment politicians.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to support HB 772. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Mark Jakubowski

808.371.4382