

LATE TESTIMONY

Personal Testimony Presented before the
House Committees on Agriculture
Health
Higher Education
Labor and Public Employment
Public Safety
and
Transportation
February 7, 2009 at 9:00 a.m.
by
Andrew G. Hashimoto

HB 318 – RELATING TO VOG

Chairs Tsuji, Yamane, Chang, Rhoads, Hanohano, and Souki, Vice Chairs Wooley, Nishimoto, Nakashima, Yamashita, Aquino, and Awana, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Andrew Hashimoto, and I serve as Dean and Director of the University of Hawaii at Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR). I am pleased to provide personal testimony on HB 318. This testimony does not represent the position of the University of Hawaii or CTAHR.

The purpose of HB 318 is to require the Department of Agriculture (DOA) to work with CTAHR to determine best methods of vog treatment and research vog-resistant varieties of plants. The bill authorizes federal funds to the DOA for each year of the biennium.

CTAHR supports the intent of this bill as it is a positive step in addressing far-reaching and critical agricultural economic issues.

In August 2008, CTAHR Cooperative Extension Service made available a publication on **Volcanic Emissions Injury to Plant Foliage** by Scot Nelson and Kelvin Sewake of CTAHR's Department of Plant and Environmental Protection Sciences which provides an overview and history of the problem, effects of the increased volcanic output on foliar injury to plants in Hawaii, what can be done to moderate it, and what the state and federal agencies have done or are planning to do to help minimize damage to Hawaii's forests and agriculture. The publication is accessible via CTAHR's website at <http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/PD-47.pdf>.

In addition, a new short video by Mike Nagao of CTAHR's Department of Tropical Plant and Soil Sciences on vog damage on selected crops on the Big Island has just become available for viewing.

Although CTAHR currently has limited funds to conduct studies on the effects of vog on flower crops, grasses and vegetables, in order to provide more effective long-term assistance to growers, CTAHR recommends the addition of a junior researcher position for Hawaii County CTAHR. Funding such a position would require \$70,000 in annual salary plus fringe benefit costs and \$15,000 in operating costs, for a total of \$85,000 annually. Funding is requested for a period of three (3) years, or a total of \$255,000 over the span of a proposed vog project. Appropriation of these funds would be a cost effective step to make a large impact in mitigating or resolving devastating and costly effects of vog that the bill proposes to accomplish.

The bill is in keeping with CTAHR's vision to actively help Hawaii diversify its economy, ensure a sustainable environment, and strengthen its communities. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

William P. Kenoi
Mayor



William T. Takaba
Managing Director

Walter K.M. Lau
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i

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February 7, 2009

The Honorable Ryan I. Yamane, Chair
And Committee Members of the House Health Committee
The Honorable Jerry L. Chang, Chair
And Committee Members of the House Higher Education Committee
The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
And Committee Members of the House Labor & Public Employment Committee
The Honorable Joseph M. Souki, Chair
And Committee Members of the House Transportation Committee
The Honorable Faye Hanohano, Chair
And Committee Members of the House Public Safety Committee
The Honorable Cliff Tsuji, Chair
And Committee Members of the House Committee on Agriculture
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Re: House Bills 313, 318, 316, 312, 317, 314 and 315

Aloha, Chairpersons and Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments in favor of these seven House Bills designed to cope with the health and economic effects from vog. We will provide more specific testimony on the individual bills, but please let me express my appreciation to members of the Legislature for addressing this serious problem that is affecting our people's lives and livelihoods.

As you know, sulfur dioxide emissions at the summit of Kilauea volcano began climbing in December 2007, and on March 12, 2008 increased sharply from the new vent at Halema'uma'u Crater. The trade winds have generally swept the gasses and acid rain southwest, causing major agricultural damage and particular hardship in communities such as Wood Valley, Hawaiian Ocean View Estates, Na'alehu and Pahala.

As you will hear today, crops have been damaged, agricultural infrastructure has deteriorated from the fumes, and people have become ill.

Ranchers, farmers and homeowners who have spent their lives building businesses and raising families in rural Ka'u, South Kona and Volcano have suddenly had to cope with completely unexpected economic losses and illnesses.

We deeply appreciate the efforts of Representative Herkes and all of the committee chairpersons and members in taking this time to search for the best methods of safeguarding the health of our Hawai'i Island residents, and the best ways to provide relief to businesses that are threatened by the increased emissions.

We particularly thank you for your willingness to address the problem in these difficult economic times, and welcome any assistance you can provide for our residents and for the many Hawai'i County agricultural operations that are trying to cope with this new threat.

Aloha,

Billy Kenoi

LATE TESTIMONY

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Mail to: P.O. Box 837
Ship to: 96-1029 Center Rd.
Pahala, HI 96777
Phone (808) 928-6456
Fax (808) 928-9016

TO:

FROM: Jeffrey McCall

DATE: February 7, 2009

I am offering this testimony in support of the following bills:

HB 318 Relating to Vog

HB 316 Relating to Agriculture

HB 312 Relating to Hazardous Substances

I am a farmer in Ka'u, growing temperate cut flowers for the local Hawaii market. We have been farming since 1983 and started our farm in Wood Valley in 1992. My business has been heavily affected by the vog from Halemaumau. Our farm had sales of \$870,000 in 2007 and 14 employees on payroll before the vog began affecting our crops. We are predicting sales in 2009 to be about \$250,000 and have had to lay off or reduce the hours of most of our employees. The majority of our crops have been killed or rendered unsalable by the vog. We are hanging on to the crops that are most resistant to the vog and have begun planting coffee on our outside fields. Our farm has been downsized and is no longer able to employ us all. I have taken outside employment and my son is now running the farm. My wife has developed an allergy to sulfites and we have moved to Hilo to avoid the worst of the vog.

Vog has affected our business and quality of life as it has for most residents of Ka'u. I ask for your support for any measures that will help us cope with this ongoing disaster.

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AGR-HED-HLT-LAB-PBS-TRN Hearing
Saturday, February 7, 2009
9:00 am
State Capitol
CR 325

Testimony in support of:

HB 312
HB 313
HB 314
HB 315
HB 316
HB 317
HB 318

We are 100% on Bills 312,313,314,315,316,317 and 318.

Thank you for your time and efforts.

Don and Martie Nitsche
Ocean View Residents