

SB 1227

REGULAR SESSION OF 2009

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Senator Shan S. Tsutsui, Vice Chair

NOTICE OF DECISION MAKING

DATE: Monday March 2, 2009
TIME: 9:30 a.m.
PLACE: Conference Room 211

LATE

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

AGENDA

SB1227,SD1
(SSCR344)

RELATING TO THE HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY
TSM, WAM

Repeals the hawaii tourism authority; establishes the department of tourism; establishes an interagency working group to facilitate the transitioning of the department of tourism; transfers the convention center enterprise special fund, the tourism special fund, and the tourism emergency trust fund to the department of tourism; renames the department of business, economic development, and tourism to the department of business and economic development. (SD1)

TESTIMONY: I oppose SB1227, SD1 for the following reasons:

1. I question the legislature's wisdom of providing tax dollars to a private profit making industry – tourism. The tourism industry business, like all private businesses in Hawaii, is expected to develop their business plan without the contribution of government money. Our Hawaii State Government, during these crucial economic times, should be focusing their spending on necessary programs that preserves constitutional interests impacting our islands.
2. The Hawaii State Government should follow the lead of our newly elected president of the United States and demand accountability from all sectors of government and in this case, from those that spend dollars on promoting tourism. There needs to be transparency on public money that is being spent effectively to promote the welfare of our State. Spending statistics can objectively determine whether money spent is associated with increased tourism traffic. This kind of analysis would lend to the rationale whether HTA or DT should be funded for

such promotion spending. The benefit of this approach provides objective analysis on your decision making.

3. Legislative priorities – in these tough economic times it is critical to examine funding priorities with fewer dollars in your pocket. Nothing should be left to waste. As a home owner, parent and grandparent with 11 bodies under my roof, my survival rate is as good as it gets because I hold everyone accountable to share in the cost of living expenses. Were that not a mandate, we would be one more statistic in the national mortgage default category.
4. As a native Hawaiian Beneficiary of the Hawaiian Homes program, I have understood that the condition for statehood *promised care for native Hawaiians*. At that time, the most visible need was the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921. Nineteen years later, after Statehood, the homestead program seemed to have been ignored, attempting to operate on a shoestring budget. In 1978 the Hawaii State Constitutional Convention, among other items of concern, determined the legislature shall provide adequate funding for the Hawaiian Homes program and administrative costs. (Art. 12. Sect 1). Those lawmakers made it clear in their committee reports *that the program should not be in the business of leasing out its lands to non Hawaiians as a means of generating funding for homes, agriculture and pastoral ranching*. To this day, that Constitutional mandate has been literally ignored. What appalls me even further, is the legislature, as well as the Hawaiian Homelands program, has not made any inquiries as to why this constitutional mandate has not been activated. I have been schooled in my early years of education that in our society, we live by the rules (laws) we set in place. Our Hawaii's government is in need of examining its performance record where apparent disparities exist and to correct it to get the support of our tax payers. One final thought - when HTA, in its promotional discourse, inserts "*host culture*" into their marketing schemes to lure tourists to Hawaii, there will come a day when that *spirit* of our culture will no longer be a reality. Tourist will go elsewhere.

Respectfully,

Richard "Dickie" Alihilani Nelson III
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