

Senator Colleen Hanabusa
Opening Day Speech
2010 Regular Session

January 20, 2010

The Capitol is quiet today. The crowds and celebrations that typically accompany an opening day of the Hawaii State Legislature are absent. Because while we still welcome with open arms anyone who wants to ask for our help or express their point of view, we know that this session will be different. Now is not the time to celebrate. Now is the time to work.

We face unprecedented challenges in our homes, in our communities, and in this Capitol. For our neighbors, friends and families, for the people who supported us, elected us, and entrusted their future to us, the question is often one of survival. How will they cope with an economic outlook that has continued to worsen, and a recovery that seems to forever sit at the farthest horizon?

For those of us in this chamber, the question is how we will make a difference in this, the most difficult session we are likely to see in our legislative careers.

How will we lay the foundation of our state's success while confronting the inescapable reality that we must trim expenses and balance our budget again, while continuing to serve those in our community who truly rely on our assistance?

And, perhaps more importantly, how will we in state government regain the confidence of our community? How will we demonstrate that we are up to this task, that we can make a difference, that we will provide the vision and leadership that it will take to provide the promising tomorrow that everyone wants, and everyone should have a right to expect?

If ever there was a moment when we must rise to meet the challenge, now is the time.

Now is the time to work collaboratively, within this chamber, across the rotunda to the House of Representatives, and up to the fifth floor to engage the governor and make a united effort to seek real solutions. Now is the time to put aside differences in party and personal agendas and instead focus on what is truly best for our state and the people we represent.

Now is the time to prove that we have our priorities in order, that we reflect the values that have made Hawaii special, and that we possess the political will and leadership skills to work past the bad facts to good solutions.

Now is the time to stand up and show that we deserve the confidence of Hawaii's people.

The Capitol is quiet today because we have work to do, and no time to spare. We will find time to celebrate when our job is done. There will come a moment in the future when others will look back at this session, and they will ask if we found it within ourselves to answer the difficult questions, make the hard choices, and do the hard work to accomplish what they trusted us to do.

My fellow senators, my colleagues, my friends, we have it in our power and in our hearts to make the answer to that question a resounding "yes." Because we know that our time is now.

Thank you.

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