



Representative
 Kyle Yamashita
 State Capitol
 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813



Presorted Standard
 U.S. Postage Paid
 Honolulu, Hawaii
 Permit No. 169

Legislative News

A newsletter from State Representative Kyle Yamashita

12th District • Upcountry Maui

2006 Session

We are fortunate that Hawaii's economy is doing so well, and we at the 2006 Legislature are hopeful that the State of Hawaii will experience a significant budget surplus that will last for the next few years. It is our hope to be able to use some of the expected surplus to fund programs and projects that have suffered from chronic underfunding over the past decade.

I and other legislators understand that while we may be in a position to address important state needs at this time, we also understand our responsibility to you to spend any part of that surplus wisely and efficiently.

If you have any thoughts about State programs that need additional funding, please feel free to contact me by calling 984-2400, ext. 66330, sending an email to repyamashita@capitol.hawaii.gov, or writing to me at the State Capitol, Room 442, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813. Your ideas are important to me.

Mahalo,

Kyle T. Yamashita

2006 Majority Package

Prior to the opening of the legislature, the majority members of the House and Senate unveiled a joint Majority Package for the 2006 legislative session. I fully support these proposals and agree that we currently have an opportunity to invest our resources for our future.

Public Education

Department of Education (DOE)

- Fund repair and maintenance program, including retrofitting the public schools as shelters for natural disasters: \$150 million in general funds and general obligation bonds.
- Supplemental funding for operations: \$80 million.
- Authorize the use of certificates of participation for construction of new schools; establish special fund with \$50 million from the general fund, with interest from the fund to be used for lease back payments by the school.

University of Hawaii

- Fund deferred repair and maintenance of buildings: \$84 million.
- Supplemental funding for operations: \$50-60 million.

Economic Development

Support Diversified Agriculture

- (1) Repair and maintain state and private irrigation systems:

- \$50 million fund, of which \$12 million from general fund, \$38 million Capital Improvements Project (CIP);
 - State funds to be matched by \$50 million in federal funding;
 - 15 public and private irrigation systems covered;
 - Incentives for private landowners to repair and maintain irrigation systems through Special Purpose Revenue Bonds and tax credits, provided the land within 2 miles of the irrigation system is designated as Important Agricultural Land (IAL).
- (2) Enhance role of Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC):
 - Transfers responsibilities for marketing the agricultural

continued on page 2



Kyle with Speaker Calvin Say and Maui Community College Students.

2006 Majority Package *continued from page 1*

industry, land management, irrigation system management to ADC.

- Maintains Department of Agriculture as regulatory agency.

New Initiatives for Research and Development

- Create significant and dedicated funding to support research in life sciences, biotechnology, biological renewable energy, agricultural biology, medical sciences, and the cancer center.
- Funding to be administered by successor organization to Life Sciences Council, attached to UH.

Workforce Development

- Creates new program within the community colleges at UH for the purpose of building a work force in high needs areas, such as construction, agriculture, nursing, etc.
- Funding: \$5 million; plus use of Reed Act money.

Housing

The Joint Legislative Housing and Homeless Task Force is preparing its report that is expected to be released early next week. We expect comprehensive recommendations to meet the suggestions of the stakeholders who participated in the task force discussions. Among those expected recommendations are the following concepts:

- (1) Increase funding for the Rental Housing Trust Fund.
- (2) Increase funding for homeless and transitional housing.
- (3) Create developer incentives to build moderate income homes.
- (4) Identify state lands for self-help community land trusts.
- (5) Provide funding to repair vacant public housing units.

Energy

Pilot projects in four schools

- Install solar energy systems in four schools where significant roof repairs are scheduled, and where demonstrated energy savings can be met to justify expense of alternative energy system, and where net metering can offset expense.
- CIP: \$5 million

Renewable energy tax credits

- Remove sunset date of January 1, 2008.
- Increase amount eligible for 35% tax credit for residential properties that install solar photovoltaic panels from \$1,750 to 5,000;
- Increase amount eligible for 20% tax credit for commercial properties that install wind or solar photovoltaic panels from \$250,000 to \$500,000

Energy Conservation in Public Buildings

- New construction in public buildings shall meet the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) silver standards.
- Implement and fund Act 77, Energy Efficiency in State Facilities, SLH 2002, by prioritizing energy conservation projects for existing public buildings which



Kyle working diligently in the House of Representatives Chamber.

result in immediate pay back in cost savings and conservation.

- Funding: CIP \$100 million

Pilot program for Pay As You Save (PAYS) to finance residential solar water heaters through public utility company.

Unclaimed Property

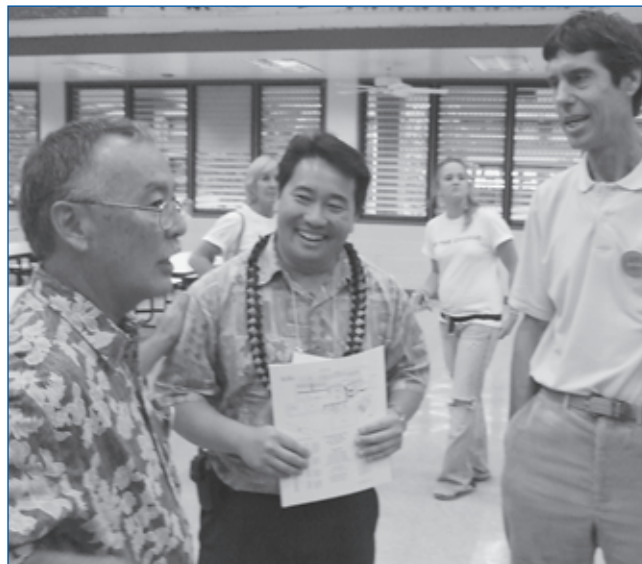
The Unclaimed Property Program, which is run by the Department of Budget and Finance, collects and holds abandoned property from companies, states, state agencies, etc. and returns the property to its rightful owners at no charge.

Abandoned property commonly includes checking and savings accounts, stock certificates and contents of safe deposit boxes that have had no activity for at least five years.

You can search the Department of Budget and Finance's unclaimed property database to see if you may have any unclaimed property. The website address is <http://pahoe.ehawaii.gov/lilo/app>. After searching their database, if you believe you

may have unclaimed property, follow the instructions provided. There will be documents you may need to provide and the process may take a while. But if you are the rightful owner and the proper documents are verified, the property will be returned to you.

As of December 31, 2005, there is over \$110 million that the department is holding to return to its rightful owners. If you have questions about the program, please visit <http://pahoe.ehawaii.gov/lilo/app?page=faqs>.



Conversing with a concerned teacher and community member

Hawaii's Gift Certificate Law

Over the holiday season many of you may have received gift cards and gift certificates as presents. Did you know Hawaii's law regarding gift certificates, which include gift cards, was changed?

Since July 1, 2005, Hawaii law requires that the expiration of gift certificates shall not be less than two years from the date of issuance. Additionally, the law prohibits the charging of any service fee, including but not limited to a service fee for dormancy or inactivity.

The law was changed because there were numerous complaints from consumers about the fees that were being charged by merchants for the purchase of gift certificates. There were also concerns regarding the charging of service fees for inactivity. Merchants complained that the old state law required that gift certificates not expire if there was no expiration date writing on the gift certificates. With the popularity of electronic gift cards, merchants were finding it difficult to comply with the old state law.

The new law requires the printing of the date of issuance and the expiration date on the face of the gift certificate. For electronic gift cards, these items must be printed on the sales receipt. Additionally, people who receive gift certificates will have at least two years to redeem them for their full value without any penalty for not using them.

Gift certificates that are issued as part of an awards, loyalty or promotional program, or to a non-profit charity organization, where no money or anything of value is given to the issuer by the consumer in exchange for the gift certificate, are still required to have the expiration date printed on the gift certificate (if applicable). However, these types of gift certificates are exempt from the other provisions of the gift certificate law.

Home Water Treatment Devices

Home water treatment devices are often used by consumers to improve the taste of their tap water. Others treat their water because of specific health concerns and the desire to take extra precautions against a particular contaminant. Whatever your reason for considering a home water treatment device, we would like to offer the following advice:

- Learn about the quality of your drinking water. Water utilities, such as the county Department of Water Supply, provide consumer confidence reports to each of their customers. These summarize the quality of the drinking water and identify detected contaminants.
- Determine why you want to treat your water. For example, what chemical contaminant or microorganisms are you trying to remove?
- Select a treatment unit that has been tested and certified by an appropriate, independent testing organization for the reduction of the desired contaminant. The National Sanitation Foundation, Underwriter's Laboratories, and Water Quality Association are all accredited for testing and certifying water treatment devices by the American National Standards Institute. Verify the certification of the selected unit and be sure that you understand any limitations associated with the certification.
- Buyers beware! Do a lot of research, shop around, ask questions, and be wary of potential deceptive sales practices. Please refer to the Federal Trade Commission information noted in the last section.
- Carefully read and follow the manufacturer's instructions or operating manual. All home treatment devices require proper installation, as well as regular maintenance, in order to operate properly. For example, filter cartridges need to be changed on a regular basis (likely based on both the time in use and the amount of water treated) as recommended by the manufacturer.

In certain instances, home treatment devices can cause other unintended problems:

- Any filter can become a breeding ground for microorganisms, particularly when not replaced regularly or maintained as directed by the manufacturer.
- Careful consideration must be given when installing a home treatment device capable of removing disinfectants, such as chlorine, ahead of all household piping (a.k.a., point-of-entry or whole house system). For example, when a

continued on page 4



Together with Senators and concerned parents of Makawao Elementary School.

Home Water Treatment Devices *continued from page 3*

granular activated carbon filter is installed at the point-of-entry to a home for the purposes of removing chlorine, the treated water will have low or no disinfectant, thereby allowing bacteria to grow unchecked throughout the rest of the home plumbing system.

- Water softeners may add sodium to drinking water while removing calcium and magnesium. This could be an issue for people trying to limit their sodium intake.
- Reverse osmosis units can waste a significant amount of water.

Where to Get More Information

The following websites may provide helpful information on drinking water quality and the selection and use of home water treatment devices:

- Most water utilities are required to provide their customers with an annual water quality report (a.k.a., consumer confidence report). If you are serviced by one of the four county water departments, your report can be accessed on their web sites:

Maui Department of Water Supply:
www.mauiwater.org/waterquality.html

Honolulu Board of Water Supply:
www.hbws.org/cssweb/display.cfm?sid=1081

Hawaii Department of Water Supply:
www.hawaiiidws.org/ccrpage.htm

Kauai Department of Water:
www.kauaiwater.org/waterqualityrpt_pdf.asp

- The National Sanitation Foundation is recognized internationally throughout the water industry and has a very informative web site with certified product listings:

http://www.nsf.org/consumer/drinking_water/dw_treatment.asp?program=WaterTre

- The Underwriters Laboratories also certifies home water treatment units and lists them on its web site: www.ul.com/water/prodcert/waterqry.html
- The Water Quality Association is an association of manufacturers, distributors, and dealers of water treatment systems for household, commercial, and industrial applications. They maintain a listing of certified units on their web site: www.wqa.org
- The United States Environmental Protection Agency's web site provides some useful information on water treatment and more general information on the topic of drinking water:
www.epa.gov/safewater/faq/pdfs/fs_healthseries_filtration.pdf
www.epa.gov/safewater/wot/pdfs/book_waterontap_full.pdf
- Useful information on buying home water treatment units as well as consumer protection issues, originally developed in 1989 by the Federal Trade Commission, Bureau of Consumer Protection with assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency can be found at:
www.doityourself.com/info/homewatertreatments.htm
www.doityourself.com/info/homewater.htm
- Consumer Reports magazine (www.consumerreports.org) has frequently published articles on home water treatment devices. Past issues (e.g., "Fit to Drink?" January 1990, "Is There Lead In Your Water?" and "Water Treatment Devices" February 1993, "Should You Use a Water Filter?" July 1997, etc.) of Consumer Reports magazine may be available for review at your local public library.

This information was provided by the State Department of Health, Environmental Health Branch.



Meeting with colleagues.

Contact Representative Kyle T. Yamashita

State Capitol, Room 442
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Phone: (808) 586-6330

Fax: (808) 586-6331

E-mail:

repyamashita@capitol.hawaii.gov