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Please see news release below regarding Senator Sam Slom's Opening Day remarks.

NEWS RELEASE

EMBARGO until Wednesday, January 21, 2015, 10:00 am

Senate Minority Opening Day Remarks — 28th State Legislature, 2015 By State Senator Sam Slom (R – 9th District O’ahu), Senate Minority Leader

HONOLULU—*Today marks the opening of the 2015 legislative session, and Senator Sam Slom took to the floor to speak on behalf of the Senate Minority. Senator Slom's opening day speech is as follows:*

Senator Slom said, “Senate President Kim, Governor Ige, our Military, distinguished guests and overburdened Hawaii taxpayers, on behalf of the entire Senate Minority: Aloha!

First, let me reassure all of you who have been worried, that I remain a Republican—I’m not switching parties— and will continue to represent the loyal, but responsible, opposition to harmful legislation, while advocating reasonable alternative legislation to solve problems and ease the economic burdens on our citizens.

It has become increasingly difficult to stand up and speak out against the status quo and call for change in Hawaii. Yet it must be done. There are some who would silence any dissent.

Sometimes there are severe political, media, economic and social consequences for speaking out. Ask former UH Chancellor Tom Apple. Ask me.

With a New Year, we remain hopeful with a new Administration we may actually get some positive change.

We now have a Governor, who was one of us in the Senate, whom I respect —with an engineering and not a community organizing background. As he said, government can't do it alone; people must get involved and do some of the "heavy lifting" to solve our problems still left over from years past.

Our job is to restore and encourage the public's confidence in our process, and to be more transparent and accountable ourselves, while empowering our citizens. We have to do more than just talk or make speeches; we need appropriate action. We can do this.

The public feels disconnected because we haven't done a good enough job. There haven't been consequences for bad behavior in government. We have been lax in the oversight of billions of taxpayer dollars.

Your Senate Minority offers a thoughtful, effective 5 point Action Agenda for 2015:

- (1) Economic Diversification and Budget Reduction.
- (2) Meaningful, Outcome Based Education
- (3) Health Connector, Obamacare and HHSC Alternatives.
- (4) Changes to the Public Utilities Commission and Analysis of the Proposed HECO Merger.
- (5) Reduction in the Cost of Living for our Beleaguered Residents, middle class and poor.

Your Senate Minority continues to caution that Hawaii's economy, overall, has not turned an economic corner and that many more of our citizens and small businesses are struggling needlessly.

Every national organization rates Hawaii worst in economic opportunity. We are now worried that more than 20,000 of our active duty Army and 30,000 dependents—which we too often take for granted or criticize—may leave Hawaii causing more than \$1 billion in economic loss. Our military is more than dollars; they contribute to all of our society. This decision will be made outside of Hawaii. In Hawaii, we can improve our business climate and diversify by listening to those who have the proven ability to create jobs.

Our \$25 billion operating budget is bloated and must be trimmed as we propose. So too our \$20 billion unfunded liability. It can be done. WE MUST PROMISE NO NEW TAXES! We can't throw good money after bad for the "Black Hole" that is the flawed O'ahu fixed rail transit. It is all about development, not alleviation of congestion. It is \$700 million over budget already. No extension of the General Excise Tax should be permitted by this Legislature. Not one more

penny to those who purposefully misled the taxpayers of this State. Otherwise, elected officials are like enablers who assist drug addicts to become more destructive.

Stop this project now and provide real transportation alternatives like “Hot Lanes,” already advanced.

Our educational system in Hawaii has shortchanged the students and parents who pay for education. We need a comprehensive financial and managerial audit of both the DOE and my Alma Mater, the University of Hawaii. UH said it’s proud to have “52% of the students able to graduate in 6 years.” That’s not good enough.

The Legislature must say NO to continued short falls in DOE programs, the annual UH Athletics deficits and the spendthrift UH Cancer Center, and YES to more classroom teaching. Tuition must reflect actual costs, not large salaries to coaches and VIPs.

The PUC has been without effective leadership for the past several years. Too many dockets remain open. We have worked with new Chair Randy Iwase in the past. We will support a changing mission for the PUC and an objective analysis of the planned \$4 billion HECO merger. My staff member Kathryn Higa, an experienced mergers and acquisitions analyst, has already been on this task since December.

The Hawaii Health Connector has spent through millions of dollars without noticeable results or honesty in presentations. The data it provides to the Legislature does not match up with federal data. It should receive no more taxpayer funds.

The Medicaid computer failure may cost taxpayers up to \$100 million more. The Legislature has to monitor outside contracts when agencies don’t.

We should continue to practice compassion, but not ignorance, in helping people truly in need while separating those who prey on others and game the system.

We have to increase our residents’ standard of living by reducing their burdensome costs. We can do this by food and medical GET tax relief, and by advancing federal affordable cargo shipping reform of the Jones Act. The Senate Minority has been cooperating with like-minded lawmakers in Alaska, Guam and Puerto Rico.

We have many other positive legislative changes. Come see us and help our bills be heard.

On behalf of the Senate Minority, I pledge our continued efforts to support good legislation regardless of who introduces it; to examine and report honestly on the impact of all bills, and to work toward ending Legislative exemptions for ourselves for laws we pass on to others.

We celebrate our God-given liberty, and our ability to change. Our goal should not just be a “New Day,” but, a Better Day. This is not a partisan issue. Together, we must navigate a different course with a vision of how much greater Hawaii can be.

Finally, this is the “Year of the Sheep.” My hope and advice is that the taxpayers and voters of Hawaii will stop being sheep, and become more independent, vigilant, and hold their elected officials to a higher standard.

God Bless Hawaii, our Armed Forces men and women, and the United States of America.”

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FOR MEDIA ONLY: For digital images and video from Opening Day 2015, or an interview with Senator Sam Slom, please contact Senator Sam Slom direct at (808) 349-5438 or Herb Laybon at (808) 586-6780 / h.laybon@capitol.hawaii.gov

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