

MAR 11 2022

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU TO CONDUCT A STUDY
ON THE BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF IMPLEMENTING A UNICAMERAL
LEGISLATURE IN HAWAII.

1 WHEREAS, many Hawaii residents have expressed growing
2 concern about the accessibility and accountability of the
3 State's government; and
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5 WHEREAS, part of that concern stems from the structure of
6 the State's legislative body; and
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8 WHEREAS, Hawaii's Legislature is bicameral, comprising two
9 independent chambers; and
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11 WHEREAS, the bicameral legislative structure provides a
12 system of checks and balances that facilitates deliberation,
13 safeguards against the passage of carelessly-drafted
14 legislation, and promotes open government by affording citizens
15 the opportunity to express their opinions; and
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17 WHEREAS, the bicameral system also has drawbacks, including
18 duplicative committee structures, staffing, and bills; and
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20 WHEREAS, in recent years, the bicameral system in Hawaii
21 has become cumbersome and inefficient, leading to growing public
22 concern about the accessibility and accountability of the
23 State's government; and
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25 WHEREAS, procedures and policies differ among the two
26 legislative chambers, sometimes substantially, making it
27 confusing, time-consuming, and difficult for citizens to
28 participate; and
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30 WHEREAS, the two legislative chambers often take opposing
31 positions on issues, resulting in inaction or decisions being
32 made in conference committees without public testimony; and



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2 WHEREAS, a unicameral legislature could eliminate
3 duplicative work; and
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5 WHEREAS, a unicameral legislature could also result in an
6 immediate cost savings if fewer legislators are constitutionally
7 permitted; and
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9 WHEREAS, in *Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. 533 (1964), the
10 United States Supreme Court ruled that the electoral districts
11 of state legislative chambers must be roughly equal in
12 population; and
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14 WHEREAS, in the time since the Court's decision in
15 *Reynolds*, it may no longer be necessary for the Senate to act as
16 a counterbalance between the representation of large towns and
17 cities and the representation of smaller rural communities; and
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19 WHEREAS, given these factors, Hawaii may benefit from a
20 unicameral legislature, which, in the United States, is
21 currently only used in Nebraska; now, therefore,
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23 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first
24 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2022, the
25 House of Representatives concurring, that the Legislative
26 Reference Bureau is requested to conduct a study on the benefits
27 and drawbacks of implementing a unicameral legislature in
28 Hawaii; and
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30 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study is requested to
31 include a review of the history of unicameral legislatures in
32 America, including the history of Nebraska's conversion from a
33 bicameral system to a unicameral system, and the recent
34 experiences of Minnesota and other states that are considering
35 implementing unicameral legislatures; and
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37 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study is also requested to
38 address the likely effects of implementing a unicameral
39 legislature in Hawaii on:
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- 41 (1) The representativeness and responsiveness of the
42 Legislature;



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- 1
- 2 (2) The stability of the law;
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- 4 (3) The accountability of legislators;
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- 6 (4) The authority of legislators;
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- 8 (5) The concentration of power within the Legislature;
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- 10 (6) The quality of legislative decision making;
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- 12 (7) The efficiency and economy of the Legislature; and
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- 14 (8) Legislative custom and precedent; and
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16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Reference
17 Bureau is requested to submit a report to the Legislature no
18 later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular
19 Session of 2023; and

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21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this
22 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of the
23 Legislative Reference Bureau.

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OFFERED BY:

Kurt Ferrell

By Request

