



Aloha from the 2002 State Legislative Session

Volume I, Issue No.2

March 1st, 2002

- ◆ For bill and hearing information, visit www.capitol.hawaii.gov. Click onto the link "Status & Documents" and type in your bill number, i.e., SB2336.
- ◆ To call toll-free from Maui, dial 984-2400, listen to the voice prompts, then dial 77225 and #. To provide testimony, please email to testimony@capitol.hawaii.gov.
- ◆ Senator English is the Majority Floor Leader and serves on the committees of Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Housing; Education; Health and Human Services; Tourism and Intergovernmental Affairs; Water, Land, Energy, and Environment.

The events of September 11, 2002 shook us to our core and raised up all that we hold dear, our families, our friends and neighbors, our island home.

We became painfully aware of our economy's dependence on visitors from around the globe and its ripple effect. Emergency powers were granted the Governor. Measures to stimulate the economy and provide tax relief were passed. \$1,000,000 food and housing assistance was appropriated. Temporary programs were created to provide health insurance, extend unemployment insurance benefits and establish an emergency environmental workforce.

These were short-term fixes to tie us over to the 2002 Session.

In the first 25 days of this session, we continue to grapple with our desires to improve public education, address a looming long-term care need, help business, pay attention to our natural resources and balance the budget, and do all of this in a systemic way, in a manner that gets to the root of the matter.

How do we do this?

In the area of public education, many feel unable to effect change and are put off by the distance of a very centralized system. I support two innovative restructuring meas-



ures which have crossed to the House, SB 3018 and SB 2102 SD1. These bills move governance and resources closer to the schools and

- establish at least 15 school complex areas, each managed and supervised by a chief executive officer;
- replace the current Board of Education* with regionally-elected boards of education and a statewide board of education composed of its members; and
- require the statewide board to ensure that appropriations of funding among the educational regions are allocated in a fair and equitable manner.

*subject to constitutional amendment

An election for all members of the regional boards of education established by SB 3018 would be held at the 2004 general election.

Regarding long-term care, this issue will not disappear by our inaction. Affording some relief, SB 2416 SD2 which has crossed over to the House, is the culmination of a 10-year effort to develop and implement a plan for a dedicated source of revenue to provide a state-funded long-term care services system. As drafted, beginning January 1, 2003, a mandatory long-term care income tax of \$10 per month* per person** who receives a paycheck, either as an employee without regard to number of hours worked, or self-employed, would be collected. Benefit payments for long-term care services would commence July 1, 2005; the defined benefit payment would be \$70 a day up to a cumulative period of 365 days.

*\$10.50/month in 2004, \$11.03 /month in 2005; \$11.58/month in 2006; \$12.16/month in 2007 and \$12.77/month in 2008

** age 25 to 98

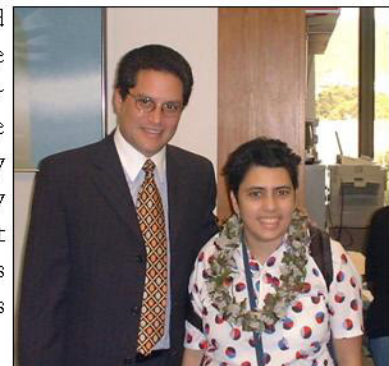
I'll continue this discussion of other significant crossover legislation in the areas of business, natural resources, and budget in the next issues.

M a l a m a pono,

9. Robert English

The ARC at the Legislature

Mahalo to Christine Faria, our wonderful intern from the ARC who helped our office during the week of February 4th thru 8th, 2002. Christina came to our office as part of The Arc's 4th Annual Legislative Internship Program, whose mission is to help individuals with mental retardation to have the opportunity to choose and realize their goals of where and how they learn, live, work, and play. In addition, earlier this past year we were lucky to have another ARC intern with us, Jacqueline Takase. Jackie was a great help to us. She processed bills as they came in and performed numerous other office tasks. I commend the program and am thankful for participants like Christina and Jackie for their individual efforts.



International Relations



Following a delegation of legislators from Fukuoka who commemorated the 20th anniversary of the Hawaii and Fukuoka sister-state relationship, Japanese students from Fukuoka recently visited Hawaii and honored me with a short visit.



I appreciate the opportunity to work with future leaders from around the world. Winnis Map, a University of Hawai'i student from Papua New Guinea is interested in public service and will be working with us throughout

2002 Legislative Timetable *Remaining Deadlines...*

March

- 1st- Filing Deadline for First Decking
- 4th- One Day Recess
- 6th- One Day Recess
- 7th- First Crossover
- 13th- Last Day to intro substantive resolutions
- 22nd- Second Lateral

April

- 5th- Filing Deadline for Second Decking
- 8th- One Day Recess
- 10th- One Day Recess
- 11th- Last Day to Disagree
- 11th- Second Crossover
- 16th- One Day Recess
- 18th- Deadline for final form of constitutional amendments
- 22nd- Second Crossover for concurrent resolutions
- 25th- Last Day to file non-fiscal bills to deck for Final Reading
- 26th- Last to file fiscal bills to deck for final reading
- 29th- One Day Recess

May

- 1st- One Day Recess
- 2nd- Adjournment Sine Die

Press Time

The Emergency Environmental Workforce Bill Successfully Crossed Over to the House

SB 2900 makes an appropriation to continue the efforts of the emergency environmental workforce established after last year's Third Special Session, and successfully crossed over to the House. The passing of this bill is critically important in maintaining the progress the emergency environmental workforce has made towards preserving the health of our ecosystem. Having worked with the crews in Hana, I fully appreciate the hard work involved. This workforce tackles their job aggressively and effectively, and the positive results are reflective of their dedication to the objectives of the program. The State needs this program to continue its essential work.

Aeromedical Reimbursement Rates to Ensure Air Ambulance Services to the Neighbor Islands.

On January 24th I led a bi-partisan effort to urge the Federal government to adjust Hawaii's aeromedical rates by obtaining the signatures of all 76 Senate and House members on a letter to Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson and attached Senate Concurrent Resolution 130. I introduced SCR 130 last session urging the United States Congress and Health Care Financing Administration to raise Hawaii's Medicare reimbursement rates, which are currently one of the lowest in the country, resulting in financial hardship to Hawaii's only fixed-wing aeromedical provider in the state, Hawaii Air Ambulance. This bi-partisan effort will insure that neighbor island residents are able transported to Oahu's tertiary care facilities by trained medical personnel in certified emergency aircraft. It is unfair for Hawaii to receive one of the lowest air ambulance reimbursement rates in the country, and expect medical air transport companies to survive. Increasing the Medicare reimbursements will essentially benefit the state by enabling air ambulance companies to continue providing safe transportation for our citizens.

Pfizer Program Helps Low Income Seniors Obtain Prescription Drugs and Other Health Benefits.

The new Pfizer for Living Share Card program enables needy seniors to buy a 30-day supply of medicines for a simple, flat fee of \$15 per prescription. To be eligible for the card, you must be 65 years old or older, have an individual reported annual gross income below \$18,000, or joint reported gross income below \$24,000, and have no other prescription coverage. The Share Card provides immediate access to Pfizer medicines, and health information and guidance on how seniors can apply for health benefits through existing programs. Call 1-800-717-6005 to receive an application, or visit www.pfizerforliving.com for additional information.

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