

AROUND THE CAPITOL

Bills under consideration are not the only activity buzzing around the State Capitol. Many events to educate lawmakers and the public are held, as well as those to recognize and honor members of our community. Here are three recent ones.

Education Week

The value of education in our nation is greater than ever. While precious time is yet in our hands, teachers know they must give their best to prepare students for a future that we cannot yet imagine. Former First Lady Hillary Clinton's famous declaration that it takes a village to raise our children is just as true today. Teachers are a centerpiece of that social structure. As the Leeward District Teacher of the Year Alisa Bender put it, our collective task is to lift our youth onto our shoulders so they can see what we may never see, go where we may never go, and do what we may never do.

Each year the Legislature honors outstanding educational professionals and schools, to recognize their efforts and to encourage others in the noble work of teaching. Among the awards presented: the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching; Librarian of the Year; Excellence in Service; Milken Educator; Milken Educator Teacher of Promise; MetLife/NASSP High School Principal of the Year; MetLife/NASSP Middle School Principal of the Year; NAESP Distinguished Principal of the Year; Blue Ribbon School; state Teacher of the Year; and district Teacher of the Year.

What also makes Education Week exciting is the chance to share information. Students from Campbell High School and Washington Middle Schools made a presentation on the heralded AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program, a college readiness curriculum to prepare youth for higher education. The UH system brought its solar decathlon team, showed its progress in renewable energy on its buildings, and the beautiful design of the up and coming Kapolei campus for UH West Oahu. It also shared information on some of its many programs: culinary; carpentry; tropical conservation and biology; summer bridge; biofuel; digital media; plant and biotechnology; engineering; nursing; and veterinary assisting. The Hawaii P-20 Partnerships for Education held an Open House.

Other displays and discussions: *Hiki No*, the country's first statewide student-run television network -- public charter schools -- Hawaii Education Matters (healthy foods) -- Early Learning Council -- and, robots from robotics programs at six schools. The Hawaii State Council on Development Disabilities held its 12th annual Day at the Capitol, and the Kupuna Program celebrated its 30th anniversary.

Medal of Honor

September 11, 2001 – a date of tragedy in American history. A decade later, our response to the terrorist attacks continues to have repercussions. Thousands of troops have been deployed to dangerous and volatile regions around the globe, particularly in the Middle East. Every year, the Legislature holds a Medal of Honor ceremony to recognize those men and women in uniform who have sacrificed their lives in service to our country. The Legislature created the state Medal of Honor in 2005 to express Hawaii's deep appreciation and gratitude to the loved ones of those fallen members of military. This year's ceremony was held March 29 at the State Capitol.

State Sheriffs

Hawaii's sheriffs can trace their office all the way back to royalty, a heritage unique among the 50 states. King Kamehameha III established the sheriffs' office in 1846 to serve and protect the people of Hawaii. Its enduring mission is to preserve the peace by protecting all persons and property falling within the state's jurisdiction.

Never a dull moment for those in uniform, the purview of the sheriffs covers a wide range all across the state. Sheriffs serve as body guards for the Governor and Lieutenant Governor and on request for national and international dignitaries. They provide security for the State Capitol District, Maui Memorial Hospital, Hawaii State Hospital, Waimano Training School and Hospital, and Fort Ruger. It is the lead agency for implementing federal Homeland Security guidelines. Sheriffs assist the state Harbors Division with law enforcement on waterways and in harbors. With its canine unit, it is responsible for detecting narcotics in Judiciary buildings and prisons. Sheriffs serve warrants and other legal documents, and handle accused persons from arrest through entrance into corrections centers.

The Senate recently honored the state sheriffs for their dedication and service and putting their lives on the line each day in its commitment to the safety of the public.