

Around the Capitol

The Legislative Session runs from January through May and is a busy time. More than a thousand bills have been introduced in each chamber this year alone. To see what bills are being considered, go to www.capitol.hawaii.gov. The midway point, called "First Crossover", happens on March 8.

Our open government is one thing for which I am grateful. If you watch the TV news, you've probably seen the many groups lining Beretania Street in front of the Father Damien statue, with banners in hand to catch the attention of drivers by. Several times during the Session, associations get together to educate legislators. They host informational tables to update lawmakers and the public on developments in their fields. We've had educational fairs on energy, health, caregivers, and others. All the events and sign holders make the Capitol an active environment. Here's a few of the annual events that lawmakers hold during the legislative session.

Art in the Capitol – Friday, March 2 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Thanks to the art in public places law, many local artists' pieces adorn legislators' offices. Once a year the Capitol opens its doors so the public can view the 460 paintings, collages, photos, and sculptures that are in the Legislature. You can meet and have a chat with the artists and with your lawmakers as well. There will be live music by the Hawaii Youth Symphony; a documentary on Ruthadell Anderson, the designer of the tapestries that hang in the Senate and House chambers, and a speech by the sister of Tadashi Sato, who designed the *Aquarius* mosaic in the entry level rotunda.

Education Week – March 12-16. Each March the Legislature recognizes and honors Blue Ribbon schools, Librarian of the Year, and recipients of awards for Library Excellence in Service, Milken Educator, and principal and teacher of the year. Students, teachers, and staff also host informational displays about programs at their schools.

Medal of Honor – March 28. In a solemn annual ceremony, the Legislature honors the sacrifice and memory of servicemen and servicewomen who have lost their lives in the line of duty during the previous year. The bell is rung for each of the decedents as their surviving family members are recognized. In the rotunda there will be a 21-gun salute while a military jet formation flies overhead.

Historic Preservation Awareness Day – March 30. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the event. It is a joint effort of the Heritage Caucus, Hawaii Historic Foundation, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. Many exhibits about appreciating the richness and diversity of our cultural heritage will be displayed on the second floor mezzanine.

Tsunami Awareness Training

Out in my district, two free, different public trainings about tsunami will be offered on March 3 and March 10, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Waterfront at Pu'uloa in Iroquois Point. These are offered by the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center. You can register online <https://dms.ndptc.hawaii.edu/training>, or by contacting Lydia Morikawa by e-mail at lmorikawa@hawaii.edu or by phone at 956-0609.

The March 3 session, Coastal Community Resilience, will focus on preparation and response to natural or chronic disasters, and extreme events that affect coastal communities. Modern scientific knowledge and collaborative strategies and programs will be discussed for better community-based planning.

The March 10 session focuses on Tsunami Awareness. It will provide a basic understanding of tsunamis, assessing hazards, warning and dissemination, and community response strategies. Modern science and products and methods for detecting and warning about tsunami will be discussed. Planning and preparing for a tsunami before it hits so that people know what to do and where to evacuate to before the first waves arrive, and when it is all clear and safe to return home, will also be discussed.