

Legislative Update from Senator Mike Gabbard

June 2009

SENATOR MIKE GABBARD

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Senator Gabbard presented an honorary certificate on behalf of the Hawai'i State Senate to Paul Carboni of Ewa (center) at a ceremony held at the US Coast Guard Station in Kalaeloa on May 17th in recognition of him achieving the rank of Eagle Scout. With them is Paul's proud father, Mike Carboni.



Aloha Friends,

I wish you and your ohana a Happy 4th of July! Mahalo to all our service men and woman at home and abroad for your service to our beautiful country. Please contact me if I can help you in any way. You can email me at sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov or give me a call at 586-6830. I hope you enjoy reading about some of the things happening in and around our community.

Celebrating World Ocean Day

I enjoyed speaking at the World Ocean Day celebration held at the State Capitol on June 8th. The event was organized by Beach Environmental Awareness Campaign Hawaii (B.E.A.C.H.), which was founded in 2006 by Hawaii Kai residents Suzanne Frazer and Dean Otsuki.

They've accomplished an impressive amount of ecological good in a short amount of time. Their work of organizing litter prevention campaigns, educational presentations at schools, and beach clean-ups has been successful in sharing the great need to care for Hawaii's beaches, coastline, and marine life with the community.

We were fortunate to hear from renowned expert Dr. Anthony Andrady on the dangers of plastic pollution. We also got to admire the artwork of elementary school students from around 'Oahu who participated in the Marine Debris Awareness Student Art Project.

Senator Mike Gabbard, 19th District

Listen-Story

My next community meeting is at the Kapolei Starbucks (next to the Chevron Station) on Saturday, July 18th from 9am-10am. Let's have some coffee and talk story about what's happening in the district. Hope to see you there!

You might not be aware, but there is a huge pile of plastic and other floating debris, called the Eastern Garbage Patch, which is floating in the Pacific Ocean and is roughly twice the size of the state of Texas. This is definitely cause for concern! As Chair of Senate Energy and Environment Committee Chair, I'm committed to passing legislation to help protect our environment.

(More on World Ocean Day - page 2).



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WAIKELE, VILLAGE PARK
ROYAL KUNIA, HONOKAI HALE,
WAIPAHU, AND KO 'OLINA

World Ocean Day (continued from page 1)

This session, I introduced SB 245 with the goal of banning disposable plastic shopping bags. Unfortunately, this bill had strong opposition from the food and retail industry. We tried to move a compromise bill, SB 584, that would have allowed biodegradable plastic shopping bags. This didn't make it either, but both of these measures are alive for next session. We also got very close this session to requiring big box retailers, like Costco, to have automated redemption centers for the recycling of our bottles and cans. These are the types of initiatives that we need to clean up our oceans and reduce the plastic pollution problem.



Sen. Gabbard honors Suzanne Frazer & Dean Otsuki, founders of B.E.A.C.H., at the opening of the World Ocean Day celebration at the State Capitol on June 8th.

Royal Kunia Recreation Center Project to Start in 2009

It was awesome to hear that site work on the Royal Kunia Recreation Center will begin this year. I'd been told by a constituent a few weeks ago that Castle & Cooke had notified the Royal Kunia Community Association Board that they were going to put off starting construction on the Recreation Center until 2010 because of the failing economy.



Sen. Gabbard at Puna Geothermal Ventures on the Big Island with Plant Manager Mike Kaleikini on May 21st.

As expected, many people were very upset about the decision, given the fact that Castle & Cooke had made a commitment to the community to start the project this year. I called and wrote a letter to Harry Saunders, the President of Castle & Cooke Hawaii, urging him to see if anything could be done to convince his corporate office to reconsider. Just a few days later, I got a call from Castle & Cooke informing my office that they'd decided to do the right thing.

The Center will be built through a partnership between Castle & Cooke and Halekua Development called Kunia Residential Partners, Inc. It will boast a multi-purpose room, kitchen, community association office, Honolulu Police Department field office, restrooms, and a barbeque pavilion. It is expected to open in late 2010.

New Carpenters Training Center in Kapolei

Senator Mike Gabbard and colleagues (L to R) Rep. Mike Magaoay, Rep. Marilyn Lee, Senator Norman Sakamoto, and Senator Will Espero congratulated Hawaii Carpenters Union Financial Secretary Ron Taketa at the Grand Opening for their new training center in Kapolei on May 23rd.

The new Carpenters Apprenticeship and Training and Drywall Training programs at the Training Center will give more men and women the valuable opportunity to master skills and build themselves a promising future.



Now a Major in Civil Air Patrol

I was given the honorary rank of Major in the Hawaii State Legislative Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol at a ceremony in my office on June 1st. Joining me at the presentation were Lt. Colonel Darryl Choy, Colonel Herbert Kaneshige, and Colonel Stan Fernandez.

The Civil Air Patrol has a long and illustrious history in our state and country. Just before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Civil Air Patrol was formed by over 150,000 dedicated civilian men and women across the United States. Today, the Civil Air Patrol still plays an important role in securing our national and personal safety through missions in search and rescue, homeland defense, and disaster relief. In Hawaii, the Civil Air Patrol is crucial in notifying people of tsunamis in rural areas that are not in range of the State Civil Defense sirens. The squadrons are made up of senior members, who are over 18, and cadets who are between 13-18 years of age. A big mahalo to Colonel Fernandez and the other members of the Civil Air Patrol for their important service to our state.

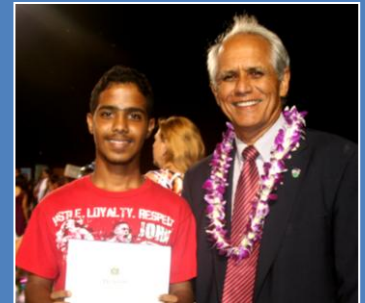


MAHALO!

Mahalo to my office interns who came from abroad to study at Kapolei High School for a year and volunteered to help out at my office in Honolulu once a week.



Douglas Brown of Kapolei was a host parent to both Nikita Yakovenko (left) from Russia and Amgad Abdullah (right) from Yemen. Both would ride the bus into town after class on Mondays and then take TheBoat back home in the evening. Nikita and Amgad were a pleasure to have around the office because of their eagerness to learn and great attitudes. Mahalo to you both, and best wishes!



Knights of Columbus Lifetime Achievement Award

My wife Carol and I were very surprised to receive the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Knights of Columbus Hawaii State Council at the Club's annual dinner at the Makaha Resort on April 25th.



The award was presented to us by Knights of Columbus State Deputy Larry Akana and Past State Deputy Joaquin "Kin" Borja. Bishop Larry Silva was also on hand for the surprise proclamation. Previous recipients of the Lifetime Achievement Award include Billy and Joey Ingalls (2008), Pat and Lillian Hourigan (2007), Victor and Georgia Abbatiello (2006), and Herbert and Lillian Chun (2005).

The Knights of Columbus State Council is very active in the community and funds multiple scholarships and charities throughout the year.

Senator Gabbard checks out the solar panels atop the Mauna Lani Resort on the Big Island on May 21, 2009.



Hawaii Looks to Solar for Economic Stimulus

I co-wrote the following article with Mark Duda – President of the Hawaii Solar Energy Association. It focuses on SB 464, one of the key renewable energy bills passed this Legislative Session, and was printed in the Honolulu Advertiser on June 15, 2009.

This legislative session, Hawaii took a significant step toward economic recovery and began in earnest to reduce its addiction to carbon-based fuels. The vehicle for these changes is SB 464, a measure that will attract hundreds of millions in out-of-state and federal investment monies to Hawaii and accelerate the adoption of clean, reliable, solar energy.

As Chair of the Senate Energy and Environment Committee, I introduced this bill, a win-win-win that will stimulate the economy, create green collar jobs, reduce carbon emissions, enhance Hawaii's energy security, and help low-income residents go solar. Support for SB 464 was remarkably broad, encompassing not only the renewable energy industry, but also the HECO Companies, the IBEW, and the local energy finance community. And, it is as popular with the Lingle Administration as the Legislature.

This unique alliance reflects the fact that solar makes sense for Hawaii. Already a \$200 million industry in 2008, solar is now responsible for 2,000 jobs statewide. With SB 464 in place, the solar industry could triple in 2009, and grow still more in 2010. And, solar continues stimulating the economy after installation, by substantially reducing operating costs for homeowners and businesses.

In passing SB 464, the legislature also moved to cut the State's own \$165 million annual power bill, which is up almost 60 percent in three years even though power consumption has actually declined. State facilities with the largest power bills – schools, universities, airports – are all well-suited for siting solar. With SB 464 in place, Hawaii-based renewable energy finance companies can fund and produce power on these roofs and sell it to the state below the cost of grid power, saving millions annually for schools and roads.

Fortunately, now is the perfect time for Hawaii to embrace solar. The Obama administration will reimburse nearly a third of the cost for as much solar as the State can build in the next eighteen months. In order to maximize the stimulus impact of this spending, the federal money is disbursed within two months of the project's completion. Meanwhile, the price of solar panels has touched its lowest level ever due to a simultaneous supply glut and reduced global demand. Solar investors now get excellent value while helping the state achieve its clean energy goals.

The emphasis of SB 464 is on leveraging private capital and federal stimulus funds. It works by *reducing* existing credit levels by ten percentage points but allowing more firms to access it. This encourages more investment in renewable energy in Hawaii. Because of the additional construction activity generated by these projects, Hawaii's solar stimulus bill will raise more tax revenues for the State than it pays out.

Importantly, SB 464 also makes solar more affordable for Hawaii's low-income residents and fixed income retirees. Hawaii's solar incentive programs currently do not work for either group so they are not able to reduce their energy consumption by investing in solar for their homes. SB 464 corrects this imbalance and makes the state incentive available to everyone.



Passing Hawaii's solar stimulus plan was a team effort at the Legislature. Committee chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim, Reps. Marcus Oshiro and Hermina Morita, and the leadership of both the House and Senate also had a hand in making the measure a success. The broad partnership that formed to support the bill now looks forward to putting Hawaii's solar stimulus plan into action when Governor Lingle continues her Administration's support of SB 464 by signing it into law.