

Legislative Update from...

Senator Mike Gabbard

May
2016

Aloha e Friends,

Sine Die, the last day of the 2016 legislative session, is on May 5th. As the new Water, Land, and Agriculture Chair, it's been a very busy and productive session. One bill that's been a priority is SB 2647, which will help us address Hawaii's dubious distinction of being the 3rd largest market in the nation for the illegal ivory trade. In a nutshell, the bill would ban the sale of ivory and other parts of endangered species in our state. You can check out a recent *Civil Beat* article I wrote about the bill within. As we approach the May 5 finish line for the 2016 Legislative Session, things are moving swiftly to a close. Be sure to keep an eye out for my June newsletter next month, where I'll provide a complete Legislative Wrap-up. In an effort to raise money for the Hawai'i Foodbank, and provide a little levity and fun entertainment amidst a rather intense session, the Legislature held its "4th Annual Capitol Idol" and brought in almost \$1200! As always, please feel free to email me at

sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov or call 586-6830 if I can help you or your family in any way. You can also follow me on Twitter @senmikegabbard, Instagram @sengabbard, or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/senmikegabbard>.

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Kapolei, Makakilo and portions of Ewa, Kalaeloa, and Waipahu



Next Listen Story Meeting

My next Listen Story meeting will be a "Legislative Session Wrap-up" held May 7 from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. at Kapolei High School cafeteria, next to the teachers' lounge. If you can't make it, send me an email, and I'll send you a summary of the meeting.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Hemp Bill Passes!

I'm happy to announce my hemp bill (SB 2659) passed the joint Senate/House conference committee! While it still officially has to be signed by the Gov., I'm pretty sure we'll make it to the finish line this year. The bill establishes an industrial hemp pilot program to allow the cultivation of industrial hemp and distribution of its seed in Hawai'i for purposes of agricultural or academic research and appropriates funds for Department of Agriculture staff to assist in the program. I brought my hemp briefcase, hemp stalk, and hemp heart bites to the conference committee to celebrate. We worked hard to get this bill in a form that everyone could agree on. This is huge for Hawai'i and a long-time in the making! We've come closer now to realizing my vision for a hemp cottage industry. Imagine: Hawai'i Hemp Oil, Hawai'i Hemp Shampoo, Hawai'i Hemp Granola... Two years ago, a bill I introduced (SB1275) was signed into law as Act 56, which initiated Hawai'i's Industrial Hemp Research Project. With over 25,000 uses—from textiles to cosmetics, paper, food, medicine, biofuel – hemp is an incredible crop that would be perfect for our state. And contrary to what some people may think, it won't get you high!

Capital Improvement Project Funds

I'm happy to report that I got word on April 10, the Governor has released \$5,000,000 in funds that the Senate appropriated last year for a new high school in Kapolei. Specifically, these funds will be used to provide the design of the planned East Kapolei High School. Location TBA. Estimated completion date is April 2018.

Foodbank Fundraisers 2015

"Capitol Idol" is an entertaining fundraiser for the Hawai'i Foodbank, founded by my office in 2012. Capitol Idol IV kicked off on April 21 in the Capitol Auditorium. Members of the Senate and House vied for the audience's support in the hopes of winning the perpetual individual and team trophies, not to mention major bragging rights.

In 2012, the House won the team award, with the Executive Branch winning in 2014. The Senate won the 2015 group perpetual trophy, with yours truly taking home the individual award. This year, after the votes were tallied by the Judiciary, I handed over my individual honorary trophy, along with the Senate Team trophy to the House. I was visualizing the headlines in the morning newspaper: House Kicks Senate Okole!

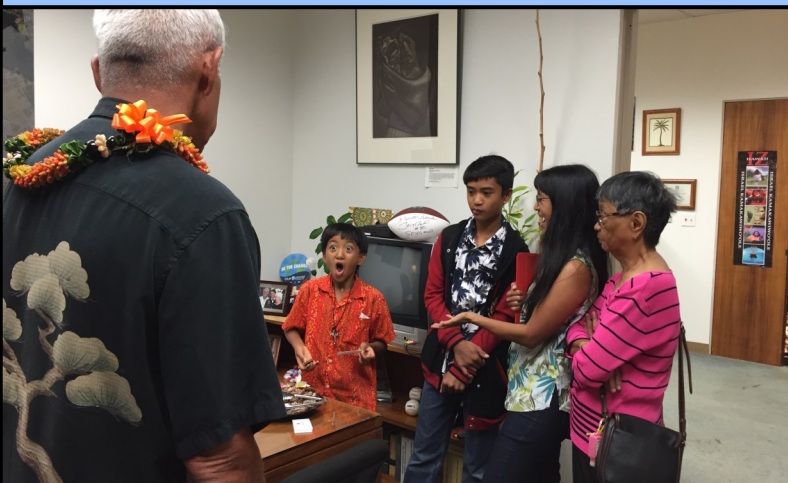
Yes, it was a House sweep. But all in good fun. I relinquished my individual trophy to a beautiful young lady, Tiare Akana, who sang an acapella rendition of "His Eyes on the Sparrow." Tiare is actually a 2014 Youth Challenge Academy graduate. I spoke to her class just before graduation. This is her first legislative session and she's a Data Entry Clerk with the House of Representatives. Congrats to the House, and especially to Tiare, who took the prize for best individual act. To see some of the photos from the event, please visit my [photo album on Facebook](#). All told, we raised almost \$1200. Mahalo to those of you who came out and to everyone who participated.



Sen. Gabbard sang a medley of folk tunes at "Capitol Idol IV" On April 21st.



Sen. Gabbard was emcee at the 6th Annual Leeward Music Festival at the Kroc Center on April 23, and along with Rep. Andria Tupola, presented Doris Dudley with an Honorary Certificate as the founder of this annual event.



This young man was clearly impressed to be meeting "Tulsi's Dad" for the first time, during "Art at the Capitol" on April 1 - an annual event where legislators open their doors to the public so they can view unique pieces of art provided by the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts and talk story with their senators and representatives. "You're Congresswoman Tulsi's Dad?!?"

(Alexander and Aaron James Santa Cruz)



Rep. Cindy Evans and Sen. Gabbard participated in the traditional coin-toss at the Capitol on April 19th to determine which body of the Legislature would perform first at Capitol Idol IV.

We Must Act Now To Save Endangered Wildlife

(The following article was published in [Civil Beat, April 22, 2016.](#))

On April 12, my House colleagues passed Senate Bill 2647 unanimously. House Speaker Joe Souki spoke for the legislation, calling it “a wonderful bill.” I couldn’t agree more. The bill prohibits trafficking of endangered wildlife species within our beautiful islands. This is an important measure, long overdue in our state.

My counterpart, Rep. Ryan Yamane, chair of the House Water and Land Committee, and I both drafted measures to address the black market for wildlife products that exists in Hawaii. During the legislative process, we engaged a wide variety of local stakeholders, and over the course of the session, we were involved in numerous negotiations. We believe the many revisions to the legislation were the result of a truly collaborative good-faith effort.

As a result, many accommodations were made to those concerned about unintended consequences of the legislation. The final version of the bill... provides clear evidence of the effort to successfully address a range of legitimate issues from gun enthusiasts, art and antique collectors and many other stakeholder groups. Consequently, many exceptions to the prohibition of sales were added to our bills, including exemptions for traditional cultural practices, guns, knives, musical instruments, and antiques.

The bill will have no effect on the thousands of families who currently possess ivory heirlooms, since it does not affect possession. It targets only the sale of illicit wildlife products. Even the original stricter requirement to document the origin of heirlooms was eased to ensure only those involved in illegal trafficking, not law-abiding jewelry owners, are targeted.

The only purpose of the bill is to stop the trafficking of animals threatened with extinction, a practice that continues to grow at an alarming pace, threatening an increasing variety of endangered animal species. The threat of extinction is due in large part to the trafficking of animal parts and products. The National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking, released in February 2014, recognized the important role states could play in protecting species subject to the illegal wildlife trade. By passing this bill, we’re doing our part as good citizens and good stewards of this earth.

Right now, we are losing the race against extinction. If current trends continue, one-half of the world’s endangered higher life forms will be extinct by the year 2100. The most effective way to discourage illegal trafficking is to eliminate markets and profits. It’s in the public interest to protect animal species threatened with extinction by prohibiting the sales of their parts within our state.

Sadly, studies have shown that Hawai’i may be the third largest market for ivory in the United States. However, New York and California, the only two states that were higher on this list, both recently passed state laws restricting ivory sales, meaning that Hawai’i is now likely at the top of the list. Now, it’s our turn.

The problem is urgent. Right now, we, as a global community, are losing the race against extinction. If current trends continue, half of the world’s endangered higher life forms will be extinct by the year 2100. If Hawaii, as the endangered species capital of the world, will not take a stand for the earth’s most critical threatened animals, who will?

Independent polls show that there is overwhelming support for this legislation. Among those surveyed, 80 percent were registered voters. And among this group, 86 percent supported the legislation, while a marginally smaller 85 percent of those not registered to vote supported a ban.

In September, the World Conservation Congress will be coming to Hawaii and the world will be watching us. We are an amazing conservation community. This bill is an opportunity to lead. It’s an opportunity to shine. It’s an opportunity to tell a new story: how the endangered species capital of the world, became the leader in endangered species protection and recovery.

We must be champions, because we are acting for those with no voice and no ability to advocate for themselves. We are acting for the most vulnerable on our planet.



LEGISLATIVE HONOREES



Sen. Gabbard presented an Honorary Certificate to representatives from the Christian Community of Hawai'i during a presentation in the Senate Chambers April 4, to bring awareness to "Christian Heritage Week." (L-R) Chanel Se-bala-Bumanglag, Kurt Kamikawa, Kealoha Benevente, Leon Siu with Christian Voice of Hawaii, Tarita Tehutu, and Kahu Fred Welch from Joyful Community Church.

"Lights, Camera, RECLINE!"

I attended a VIP opening for the new Kapolei Regal Theater in Kapolei Commons on April 20, along with Representative Sharon Har and Councilmember Kymberly Pine. The 52,000-square-foot State-of-the-Art Regal Cinemas is the Regal Entertainment Group's 10th movie theater complex in Hawai'i, but with its all-electric reclining seats and latest innovations in cinematic presentation, it's the first and only one like it in the state. The 12-auditorium luxury venue also has upgraded concessions and high tech wall-to-wall screens. They even served awesome vegetarian pupus!

During the event, I had the opportunity to meet some of the current Academy of Creative Media (ACM) students, who produced a trailer for the opening. Following are links to two television interviews, as well as the actual trailer, which was simply awesome. The links below highlight some of the students' accomplishments. They're making our "Second City" proud!

KITV interview, 04/18/16

<http://www.kitv.com/.../uh-west-oahu-students-create-special-...>

KHON-TV interview, 04/18/16

<http://khon2.com/.../uh-students-create-a-trailer-for-hawaii.../>

Trailer produced by UHWO ACM students:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/cbn3w28rp07.../ACMWESTOAHUv2-HD.mp4...>



On April 22nd, Sen. Gabbard met with lawmakers to discuss a bill that would give money to fight Rapid Ohia Death, a deadly forest disease that has infected thousands of acres of native forests on the Big Island and is quickly spreading. (AP Photo/Marina Rike)



Sen. Gabbard joined the Youth Challenge Academy Student Council of Class 44, on April 7 to help serve dinner at the Homeless Shelter Lighthouse Outreach Center in Waipahu. (L-R: Sina Atanoa -Lead Instructor, Cadet Terrones, Cadet Wright, Cadet Andrews, Cadet Bio, Mark Gleason - Deputy Director for YCA, Cadet Council President Toloumu, Sen. Gabbard, Cadet Shomida, Cadet Antonio, Cadet Mose, and Ruth Osbourn)



UHWO Academy of Creative Media (ACM) students, produced a trailer for the Kapolei Theater VIP Grand Opening. (L-R: August "Gus" Harrington, Kevin Bechayda, Melissa Garabiles, Senator Gabbard and Julian Silveria.)