



2016 Legislative Report



Hawai'i State Senate District 5

Wailuku • Waihe'e • Waiehu • Waikapu • Kahului

Aloha Kākou,

We have reached an important point in the Legislative session as several significant deadlines have passed. Bills that were introduced and approved by the Senate have been sent to the House of Representatives for further consideration. Over 3,000 bills were introduced during this Legislative biennium, and perhaps 300 of those may become law. This newsletter highlights some important measures that originated in the Senate and have crossed over to the House.

With my fellow Maui legislators, Senator Baker and Senator English, I will now be taking a close look at legislation that the House has passed to the Senate, including the State budget. As we review various measures, we will work to make changes and improvements that we believe will benefit the people of Maui.

As always, my priority is to serve the people of Central Maui and I will continue to work to improve the quality of life for our Maui residents, family, and friends. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my office. We look forward to hearing from you.

Mahalo,

Mid-Session Highlights 2016

LABOR & UNEMPLOYMENT

On Monday, March 8th, the first 88 layoffs occurred at HC&S. On the following day, Kaiser Foundation began the process of tendering job offers to employees of the Maui region public hospitals. The following measures address some of the concerns that come with the changes in our community.

[SB3038 SD2](#) would create a temporary program providing additional benefits to unemployed workers by extending their unemployment insurance benefits.

[SB3081 SD1](#) appropriates funds to establish, administer, and support on-the-job training for individuals who are unemployed and dislocated due to the closure of HC&S on Maui.



On February 17, Senator Kaiali'i Kahele took the Oath of Office and was sworn into the Senate by Hawai'i Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald. He was appointed by Governor Ige to fill the seat left vacant by his father, the late Senator Gilbert Kahele.



Maui legislators meeting with the Ka Ipu Kukui Fellows of 2016.

[SB2077 SD1](#) would authorize public employees facing position abolishment, reduction-in-force, or workforce restructuring to opt to receive either voluntary severance benefits or a special retirement benefit in lieu of exercising any reduction-in-force rights.

Similarly, [SB3000 SD1](#) establishes a retirement benefit incentive for public employees, otherwise eligible to retire, whose positions are subject to layoff due to the consolidation or abolition of functions, or the privatization of the functions of the position.

[SB2961 SD2](#) would also establish a family leave insurance program, requiring employees to make contributions into a trust fund to be used to provide family leave insurance benefits.

The Senate also passed [SB2313 SD2](#), relating to equal pay. The measure prohibits an employer from discriminating between employees based on sex by paying different wages for substantially similar work.

EDUCATION

[SB3126 SD2](#) is an emergency measure from Gov. Ige that provides for air conditioning, heat abatement, and related energy efficiency measures at public schools by appropriating funds to the Department of Education.

To provide our students with greater access to after-school activities, [SB3099 SD1](#) would establish the “Hawai’i Three to Six Out-of-School Program” for grades K-12, authorizing the Department of Education to contract with private providers to furnish out-of-school programs conducted after school hours.

JUDICIARY & LAW ENFORCEMENT

As Chair of the Committee on Judiciary and Labor, I also hear and track measures relating to the courts and crime prevention.

[SB2102 SD1](#) is the Judiciary supplemental budget request, which provides funding for an additional district court judge and other new requests from the Judiciary. Another part of the Judiciary’s package, [SB2100 SD2](#), would increase the number of district judges in the second judicial circuit on Maui by one.

[SB2551](#) would also require the Judiciary to submit an annual report to the legislature on its management of non-general funds.

Another Judiciary bill of particular interest is [SB2162 SD2](#), which would appropriate funds to establish long-term Hawaiian language resources for the Judiciary, complying with the State Constitution which affirms Hawaiian as an official language of the State.

HOUSING

[SB2153 SD1](#) would allow adult adoptees who have attained 18 years of age, adoptive parents, and birth parents open access to the adopted individual's sealed adoption records.

A number of important measures related to law enforcement have also moved forward this session. [SB2411 SD2](#) establishes requirements for body-worn cameras and vehicle cameras for county police departments.

[SB2755 SD1](#) would establish an advisory law enforcement employment standards and training board responsible for developing statewide standards for employment and training for county and state law enforcement officers who carry firearms and wear a badge.

[SB2439 SD1](#) would establish exceptions to the offense of obstructing government operations and the offense of violation of privacy in the 2nd degree for a person making a video or audio recording or photograph of a law enforcement officer while the officer is in the performance of duties in a public place or when the officer has no reasonable expectation of privacy.

AGRICULTURE

[SB2800 SD1](#) would establish a grant program within Chapter 163, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, to provide support for agriculture-related improvements to existing and emerging farms and agribusiness operations, with priority given to grants for food production.

[SB2803 SD2](#), part of the Governor's package, would also appropriate moneys for the agricultural loan program to increase the State's food sustainability.

To support business and food sustainability on Maui specifically, [SB2137 SD2](#) would establish an on-farm mentoring program to teach and train farmers to utilize a whole farm system approach to agriculture on Maui.

[SB2833 SD2](#), another bill from the Governor, increases funding for affordable rental housing development by making the State low-income housing tax credit more valuable.

[SB2998 SD2](#) provides funds for plans, design, construction, equipment, and development for renovation, improvement, upgrade, and development of the facilities of the Hawai'i Public Housing Authority statewide.

MAUI MEASURES

[SB2249 SD2](#), relating to Wailuku properties, would require the State to develop a Wailuku State Office master plan to address the shortage of space in the Wailuku State Office building and courthouse building.

[SB2369](#) would authorize special purpose revenue bonds to assist Hawai'i Renewable Resources, LLC, with the development of a natural gas production facility on Maui that will establish and fund fuel crops, with renewable natural gas and electricity production and related facilities and projects.

Similarly, [SB2983 SD1](#) would authorize special purpose revenue bonds to assist West Maui Investors, LLC, with maintaining 2 Ukumehame reservoirs.



Students of the Academy of Culinary Arts at Waipahu High School served delicious samplers on Tourism Day.



Members of the Maui High School SkillsUSA Team visited the Capitol after their competition in February.

OTHER MEASURES INTRODUCED BY SENATOR KEITH-AGARAN

[SB2426: Student Meals](#)

Prohibits denying a student a meal for the first: (1) thirty days of a semester while the student's application for free or reduced lunch is being processed; or (2) week the student's meal fund balance is zero or negative.

[SB2240 SD1: Vector Control](#)

Makes an appropriation to the Department of Health to hire more vector control employees and to reestablish a vector control branch to control the spread of animals with the potential to carry disease, including rodents and mosquitoes.

[SB3034 SD1: Marsy's Law](#)

Proposes a Constitutional Amendment to guarantee rights to victims of crimes as well as a deceased crime victim's surviving immediate family members. This means that a Victim's Bill of Rights would be inserted into the State Constitution. These rights would include affording crime victims greater access to information on public court proceedings in cases involving alleged offenses against them, more opportunities to provide input during certain proceedings, as well as higher expectations that they will be treated fairly and with respect.

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