

Senator Michelle Kidani

Twenty-eighth Hawaii State Legislature

(D) Senate District 18 – Serving Mililani Town, Waipio Gentry, Waikele, Village Park, Royal Kunia



Chair, Committee on Education

Vice Chair, Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health

Committee Member
Higher Education and the Arts
Transportation and Energy

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Aloha friends and neighbors,

The State Capitol is again filled with the bustle of lawmakers, staff, state agencies and citizens, as our 60 working day session began just a few days ago. The state operates on a two-year budget cycle, and this is the time when we consider possible changes to second year expenditures in the 12 months that begin on July first. Hearings on state agency budget requests have been underway for several weeks. It's a good time to find out from the departments where they are on projects and programs we allocated money for in past sessions, and to strengthen or otherwise re-direct those that may not be effective.

As Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, my efforts will focus on Hawaii's public schools. We continually need to keep fighting for funding so our teachers and students have what they need for success in their classrooms, and our principals and administrators can continue to be innovative and flexible to provide leadership and incentives that support that success. I am so proud of the student achievements in public schools in Senate District 18; students, principals and teachers have been daily inspirations and I love to brag about them to my friends and colleagues.

Beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, Congress has given the states a new mandate with passage of the **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**. The Act is a successor to the federal No Child Left Behind Act and significantly reduces federal government's role in elementary and secondary education. Annual standardized test requirements are retained, but the states are required to develop their own challenging standards for reading, math and science. The goal is to more closely align levels of achievement with entrance requirements for higher education and career and technical education programs.

With new responsibilities for raising and measuring education standards shifted to the states, it will be important for us to keep tabs on the Department of Education's adaptation to ESSA. At my Education Committee hearings over the last few weeks, the DOE has committed to moving forward by incorporating their Strive HI program into ESSA. It is my hope that the DOE and Superintendent Matayoshi will include input and feedback from principals, teachers and the community in this effort.

Finally, a quick note to wish you **Kung Hee Fat Choy** as we mark the beginning of the **Year of the Monkey** in the Asian lunar tradition. It is said that people born in Monkey years are clever, intelligent, quick to act, free from inhibitions, and ready to think outside the box - good attributes for success.

Me ke Aloha Pumehana,

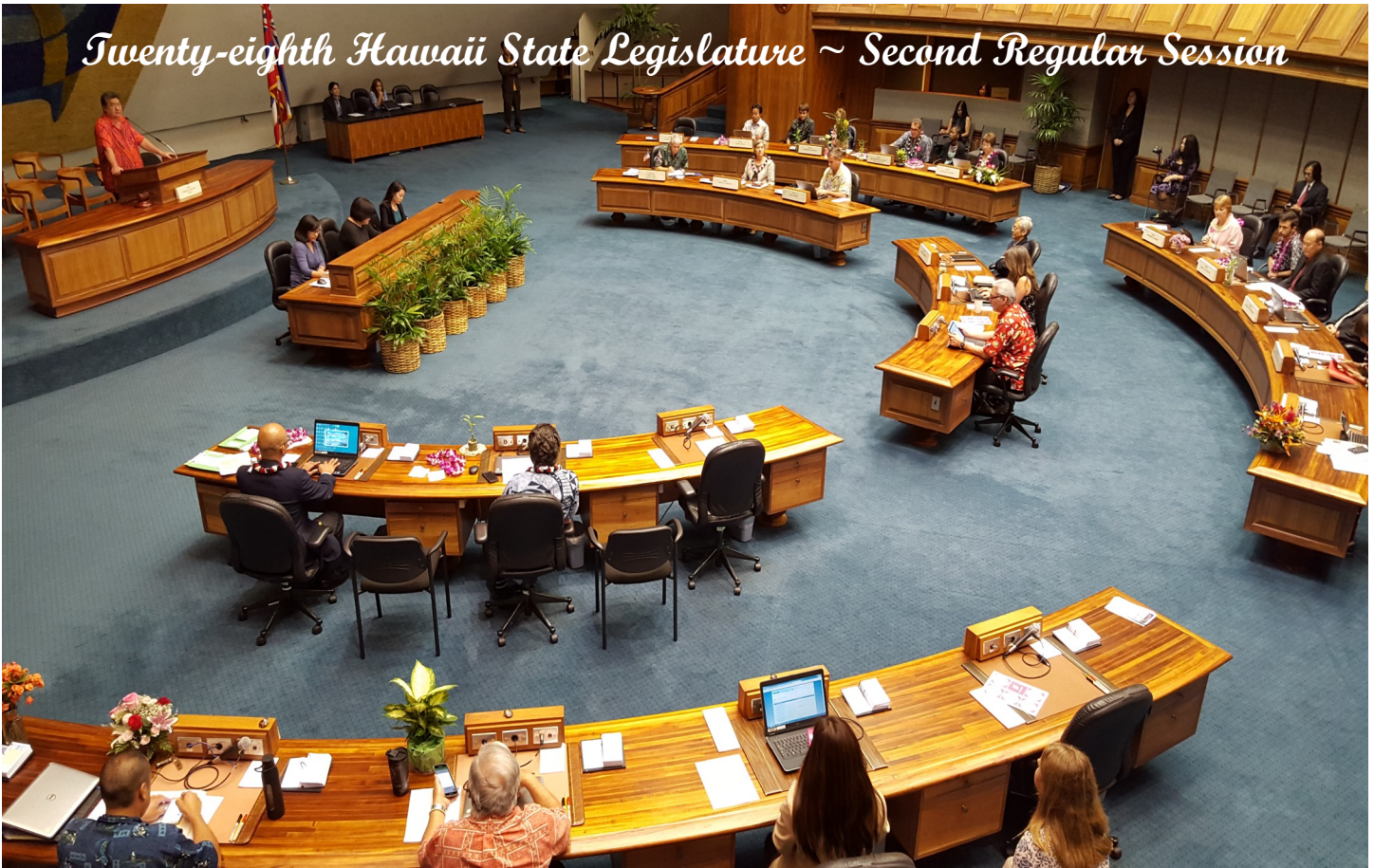
Michelle



In Memoriam . . . We were all devastated by the sudden passing of our fellow Senator, Gilbert Kahele, on January 26. He took ill and was admitted to Queen's Medical Center two days before the opening of our session on Wednesday. As a member of our Committee on Education he had accompanied us on a day-long tour of three public school campuses just two weeks ago. His illness and untimely passing was a shock to all of us. We extend our deepest sympathies and warmest Aloha to the Senator's wife and children.

I knew the Senator to be thoroughly engaged in his work on behalf of the people he represented in the 1st Senatorial District of Hilo. He was a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and served the State of Hawaii for more than 30 years in the Department of Defense at Pohakuloa Training Area. We have lost a true public servant and a wonderful friend who epitomized the Aloha Spirit in his words and actions.

Twenty-eighth Hawaii State Legislature ~ Second Regular Session



"If we conduct ourselves with dignity and humility . . . then we can achieve the kind of heart-to-heart and civil discourse that we all aspire to in how we run the people's business here in Hawai'i."

Senate President Ronald Kouchi opening day remarks



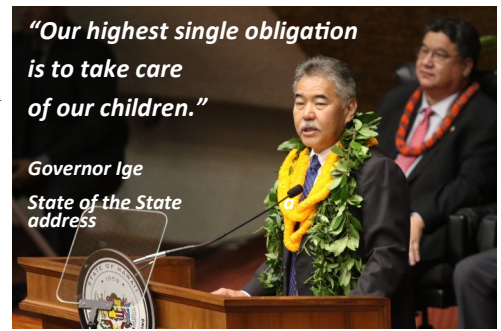
Opening day at the Legislature was a business-as-usual, low key day, but with a steady stream of guests stopping by to wish us well. I was honored to welcome **Congressman Mark Takai** (above) to my office prior to our session. *At left*, a group of students and support staff from **Mililani High School** also paid a visit.

With me from left, Janet Leilani Ward and Danielle Castro from the MHS Student Services staff, Student Body President Natalie Koch, and Student Council members Bryson Miguel, Kiley Johnson and Travis Afuso.

Department of Education under review

In his State of the State address on Monday (*at right*), **Governor Ige** mentioned only one item relating to education – “cooling our classrooms” – by using \$100 million from a Green Energy fund to air condition Hawaii’s public schools by the end of 2018.

My Senate Committee on Education, together with the House Education Committee, have been reviewing the Department of Education’s ongoing programs for several weeks. With me at last Friday’s joint briefing (*below*) is House Chair **Representative Roy Takumi** and his Vice Chair **Representative Takashi Ohno**, hearing testimony from State Librarian Stacey Aldrich. *New Federal guidelines give the states much more responsibility for achieving student success. Our goal is to support programs that demonstrate their effectiveness to the benefit of students and their teachers.*



Mililani Middle School moves to single-track calendar

Mililani Middle School
School calendar transition underway



I joined my colleague, **Senator Donovan Dela Cruz**, at a community meeting earlier this month so that Mililani Middle School parents and community residents could learn about the planned shift from the current multi-track school calendar to the traditional calendar. A two-story, 19 classroom building is being planned at the top corner of adjacent city park land. Without this, MMS would soon be the only multi-track school in the state. The new calendar should be a much better fit for families with youngsters in Mililani Middle and other schools at the same time. With the cooperation of the multiple state and city agencies involved, the process should move ahead smoothly.



Working with 'Olelo TV team leader **William Nakao** (*above left*), TV production assistant **Ethan Ugale** and reporter/host **Maile Datulayta** interviewed me on opening day for their *Capitol Commentary* program.



Winston Sakurai (*above left*), Upper School Principal at **Mililani's Hanalani School** has been named a 2016 Digital Principal for technology leadership on his campus. The award will be presented next month by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. **Corey Yasuda** (*above right*), a kindergarten teacher at **Kaleiopu'u Elementary in Village Park**, is now a National Board Certified Teacher. He and other newly-certified teachers will be recognized at a ceremony next week at the State Capitol. *Congratulations!*

Again this year, my colleague Senator Donovan Dela Cruz and I are legislative co-sponsors of a *free* tax return preparation program at the State Capitol. This year's date for hands-on help with tax returns - for individuals whose income is not more than \$55,000 - is this Saturday, January 30. If you qualify and would like help, please call for an appointment at 724-2436. Other sites for assistance are available through the VITA program; check online for details about other locations at www.hawaii tax help.org.

Hawaii State Capitol
 415 S Beretania Street, Room 329
 Honolulu 96813
Saturday, January 30
 Beginning at 9 am
 Call 724-2436
BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

Students from Waipahu High School represented the United States . . .

. . . at an international student forum in Jeju, South Korea, a few weeks ago. They were in the company of students from Malaysia, Mongolia, Vietnam, Japan, China, Russia, Oman, Qatar and the host country.

Each student had to write an essay – in English – dealing with international topics such as safety, social networking, happiness or sustainable peace.

At right, student adviser **Joy Takara, Kadi Nakamura**, Superintendent of Education in Jeju, **Melissa Dela Cruz, Bradley Tacata** and **Shayla Benito**.

Adviser Joy says the Waipahu students were all “very sad to leave their new-found friends at the forum and continue to network with them.”



News from the National Hispanic Caucus

I am an active participating member of the **National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL)** along with my fellow Senator from Mililani, **Donovan Dela Cruz**. Both of us are proud of our Puerto Rican heritage. I was so pleased to learn this month that Senator Dela Cruz has been elected to a leadership position in the organization. He will serve as Secretary of NHCSL for 2016-2017.

I am also excited to encourage Oahu high school students of Hispanic heritage to consider applying for the **John S. Martinez Leadership Scholarship**, offered each year by the NHCSL. Eligible graduating high school seniors must live in my Senate district that includes Mililani Town, a portion of Waipio Gentry, Village Park, Royal Kunia or Waialeale, or in Senator Dela Cruz's district that includes Mililani Mauka, Wahiawa, Waipio Acres, Wheeler, Whitmore Village and a portion of Poamoho.

Mililani High School grad Isis Osborne was awarded a Martinez Scholarship two years ago; she used her grant to begin her college studies at UH Manoa. Find more details about applying for this prestigious grant below.

Martinez Hispanic Scholarships available

The National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL) is now accepting applications for the John S. Martinez Leadership Scholarship.

NHCSL will award scholarships to a total of eleven Hispanic public high school students who reside in the district of a Hispanic State Legislator. Each student will receive a one-time \$3,000 grant to use toward their higher education and be recognized in their community for their excellent academic achievements.

This scholarship is named in honor of the late John S. Martinez, a Hispanic leader who served as a member of the Connecticut House of Representatives and as President of NHCSL. Qualified students should log on to www.nhcsl.org to submit an online application. .

Deadline for applications ~ March 18, 2016