

Senator Michelle Kidani

Twenty-eighth Hawaii State Legislature

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



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Aloha Friends and Neighbors,

At this point in late February, we lawmakers have completed about a third of the 2016 legislative session. Bills that are still under active consideration have been sent to second committees for additional testimony and debate. The Senate and House budget committees continue to review state agency requests for funding as they weigh high priority needs against available resources.

As Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, my goal is to guide proposed legislation through the process that will focus those resources most effectively to the benefit of teachers and their students. Good teachers who nurture student success in their daily work inspire us to be creative in our approaches to lawmaking. **In this issue of the newsletter you'll find several items about teachers and students who are all fine examples of excellence in our schools. See page 2 for some bills that aim to adequately fund our campuses.**

Here's an update on the **Kamehameha Highway** resurfacing and roadway improvements project between Ka Uka Boulevard and Waihau Street. We should now be past the several months of nighttime lane closures, but some daytime detours may be necessary as work crews complete restriping, fence replacement and sign installations. Work to increase the width of the shoulder through Kipapa Gulch was scheduled to start last month, and the entire project is expected to be finished in August 2016.

Our hats off to the **Mililani High School Girls Varsity Soccer Team** that came oh-so-close to another shot at the state championship last week. The Trojan girls went 12-1 to win the OIA Championship and entered the State Tournament as the # 1 seed. A quarterfinal win put them into the semifinals vs. Baldwin High, ending with a Mililani loss on penalty kicks. The Lady Trojans went on to defeat `Iolani to place 3rd in Saturday night's match. Thanks for an exciting season!

Me ke Aloha Pumehana,



Michelle

Congratulations to Waipahu High's Michael Sana!

The awards assembly at Waipahu High School drew an overflow crowd to the Marauder Gym a few weeks ago. Long and loud applause erupted when longtime and clearly beloved biology teacher **Michael Sana** was announced as this year's winner of the prestigious **Milken Educator Award**. The honor is often referred to as "the Oscar of teaching," and includes an unrestricted cash award of \$25,000.

During his years at Waipahu, enrollment in Advanced Placement science classes has risen dramatically with many students doing extremely well in state and national competitions.



A jubilant Michael Sana addresses WHS students at the awards assembly and receives congratulations from Governor Ige.

Notes from the Capitol



1



Days of mourning

We lost a wonderful public servant and I lost a good friend with the passing of our colleague, Senator Gilbert Kahele from Hawaii Island. In the days following his death, memorial tributes (1) covered his desk in the Senate Chamber. The Senate and the House, joined by Governor Ige and Hawaii Supreme Court Justices, gathered for a final pass by the State Capitol (2).

2



3



Senator Kahele's casket lay in repose at a memorial service in Hilo (3). On February 16, his son **Kaiali'i Kahele** was sworn in by Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald (4) to succeed his father as Senator from the First District.

4



A focus on teachers

During the same week earlier this month, two events at the State Capitol brought attention to Hawaii's public school teachers who work so hard on behalf of our youngsters in the classroom. At a late afternoon ceremony, we recognized the 2015 group of teachers who committed to the two-year study and skills-coaching program of the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards. Among the newly-certified teachers is **Corey Yasuda** (above left), a kindergarten teacher at **Kaleiopu'u Elementary School in Village Park**.

A few days later, my Committee on Education heard testimony from teachers and others on several bills that I introduced on their behalf to fund **"the schools our keiki deserve."** The hearing was followed by a huge rally of teachers (above right) who were demonstrating their support for the bills. They include SB 2586, the so-called Omnibus Bill, as well as individual bills that address portions of this bill. They call for universal "whole child" education to include visual and performing arts and Hawaiian studies (SB 2587); additional support for special education teachers and students (SB 2589 and SB 2593); provision of vocational and technical education classes (SB 2589); funding for pre-kindergarten education (SB 2595); air conditioning in our classrooms (SB 2590); and changes to policies regarding student testing and teacher evaluations. *A proposed 1 percent General Excise Tax increase for education (SB 2599) is not likely to pass out of either the Senate or House, but it is an effort to note the plight of inadequate funding for our students and teachers.*

Tourism Day at the Capitol

The Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association (HLTA) sponsored events focused on Hawaii's largest economic driver that welcomed 8.6 million visitors to the islands last year. We are proud that **Waipahu High School** was able to showcase two of its Career Academies during the day.



WHS Culinary Arts Academy students (at left) served a tasty beef salad plate and a wonderful pastry dessert. **Hospitality and Tourism Academy** students (above) are with their instructor, **Todd Nakayama**, named 2016 *Hospitality Educator of the Year* by the HLTA.

WHS Academy students were recognized during our Senate session (below). To the right in the back row, Culinary Academy Director **Elaine Matsuo**, Hospitality Academy Director **Todd Nakayama** and Vice Principal **Freeman Cheung**. *Mahalo to Waipahu's Principal Keith Hayashi for his continued visionary leadership!*



~ ~ *Friends honor exceptional librarians* ~ ~



Photo by Paul H. Mark, HSPLS

The Friends of the Library of Hawaii and co-sponsor Native Books Na Mea Hawaii honored **2015 Public Librarian of the Year Jan Kamiya** (left), McCully-Moilili Public Library Young Adult Librarian, and **2015 Excellence in Service Awardee Anna McCormick**, Library Assistant at Wahiawa Public Library.

Kamiya has made a point of visiting schools on Oahu to encourage more students to visit their libraries. She teaches Library Science at UH Manoa and is in the Hawaii Opera Theatre Chorus. McCormick first worked as a custodian at the Mililani Library more than 20 years ago and was inspired to apply for a library assistant job.

Anna's motto: Always offer service with a smile! ***Mahalo for your great work!***

Mililani High School junior Micah Andrade (seated at right) was named one of five winners in an essay contest sponsored by the Hawaii State Bar Association as part of the HSBA civic education program. Students were asked to write about how the life and work of former **Hawaii U.S. Representative Patsy T. Mink** inspire them. In the photo, Micah's Advanced Placement Government teacher at MHS, Amy Perruso along with proud sister Gabriella and mom Monica. They are in the Hawaii Supreme Court Chambers following the awards ceremony downstairs in the Judiciary History Center. Micah and his fellow winners – from Leilehua, Maui and Kauai High Schools, and from Kamehameha-Kapalama – each received a \$500 cash prize.



Congratulations



Our Mililani neighbor – **Merton Chinen**, pictured at left – has been appointed to lead the **Office of Youth Services** in the Department of Human Services, where he has worked for more than 25 years. His professional experience includes more than a dozen years with the Child Welfare Services Branch and time as a social worker for foster care youth and adoptions. In our community, Merton has worked with Boy Scout Troop 164, chartered by Mililani Town Association, and the Central Oahu Youth Baseball League. Currently, he is active with the Hawaii Forgiveness Project and Hawaii Center for Attitudinal Healing. ***Congratulations, Merton! We appreciate your service.***

Weekend fun!

9th Annual Character Counts! Celebration



I'm proud to note that all public schools in the Mililani Complex have adopted programs in the nationwide **Character Counts** program that teaches students about the importance of behaving in a fair and responsible way when they interact with everyone in their schools, their families and their neighborhoods. **This Saturday**, I'll be joining students from all of those schools at Mililani Town Center for the **9th Annual Character Counts Celebration**. The event will include entertainment, games and information booths with lots of opportunities to learn about the successes of Character Counts. Stop by if you can between 10 am and 1 pm for a truly inspiring experience. **See you there!**

Coming up!

~ AARP Hawaii, Project Dana and St. John Apostle and Evangelist Church are jointly sponsoring a **FREE** caregiver workshop on **Saturday, March 12, from 9:30 – 1:30**. This is a terrific chance for caregivers and those who expect to fill that role in the future to learn about improving the quality of life for loved ones at home and for you as a caregiver as well. The program will be at St. John's Church on Kuahelani Avenue in Mililani. **To register in advance, call 625-7773 or 348-2973.**

~ Only about three weeks until tax filing deadlines – April 15 for the IRS and April 21 for the State of Hawaii. **The IRS allows certain taxpayers to file their returns for FREE.** Any taxpayer with an adjusted gross income of \$62,000 or less may visit www.IRS.gov/freefile to prepare, complete and file their tax return forms online at no cost. Free File can also help taxpayers with tax filing requirements of the health care law. You can find more information online at www.freefilealliance.org.



Student leaders from Mililani High School stopped by my office at the Capitol to remind us about this past weekend's Mililani Carnival. *From left*, Student Body President **Natalie Koch**, ASMHS council member **Bryson Miguel**, Trojan running back **Vavae Malepeai**, and Principal **Fred Murphy**.

DOE needs your feedback – take the survey!

The Department of Education has begun its annual School Quality Survey (SQS) to gather important feedback from students, parents/guardians and staff about our public schools. The survey provides information on how schools are doing with respect to school culture, satisfaction and engagement. The feedback gathered is used to support school planning and improvement efforts, and meet legislative and Board of Education requirements.

Students in grades 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 11 are taking the survey online at school; parents and guardians of students in the surveyed grades should have received a notice from the school about whether to complete the survey online or by paper copy. Anyone with questions about the survey is encouraged to contact DOE at 733-4008.



The deadline to complete and return the SQS is March 15.

More honors for Chancellor Freitas

Former UH West Oahu Chancellor Rockne Freitas has been inducted into the Polynesian Football Hall of Fame. Following his years as a student athlete at Kamehameha Schools and Oregon State University, Rockne played for 11 seasons in the National Football League for the Detroit Lions and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. *At left*, I presented Rockne with a congratulatory certificate from the Senate; *at right*, Rockne reminisces at the Hall of Fame display that recounts his outstanding career.

We also know Rockne as the outgoing Chancellor at our university campus at West Oahu where he served with distinction to lead the young campus forward. We are grateful for his service to the University and the State of Hawaii.



Hall of Fame photo