

Senator Michelle Kidani

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



Aloha, friends and neighbors:

Among the many bills before us this session are measures that would help Hawaii reach its stated energy self-sufficiency goals over the next several years. Two of them worth watching have to do with solar energy, and are discussed in terms of the effects they could have to help consumers take advantage of incentives for installing energy-saving technologies for their homes.

Late last year, the administration restructured solar energy tax credits because they were costing the State more than had been anticipated. The credits were not eliminated, but, in simple terms, the rules were adjusted so homeowners are no longer able to claim credits for multiple systems for their homes when they were installing just one system with multiple parts.

The Senate's Committee on Ways and Means, for which I am Vice Chair, is this week considering

Senate Bill 623 to reaffirm the tax credit program, but more clearly regulate the incentives as a matter of law rather than leaving interpretations to tax administrators.

Another measure, **Senate Bill 1087**, would establish a State fund from which consumers could apply for low-cost loans to help meet the high up-front costs of installing such things as solar water heaters or rooftop photovoltaic systems. They would repay the loans over time from the savings on their electric utility bills. Hawaii could be a national leader with this initiative; SB 1087 is pending approval by the full Senate this week.

The stated goal of the Hawaii Clean Energy Initiative is that Hawaii achieve 70 percent clean energy by 2030, with 30 percent from efficiency measures and 40 percent coming from locally generated renewable resources. These are ambitious targets, and hopefully consumers will buy into a PV system with appropriate assistance. It is our obligation as legislators to assure careful long term planning for the fiscal impact any incentives might have on the State treasury. It's a delicate balancing act that we will be monitoring.

Me ke Aloha,

A milestone for Waipahu High School

Save the date! Waipahu High School is gearing up for a day of celebration to mark the **75th anniversary** of this legacy campus. Since its founding in 1938, the school has graduated nearly 35,000 students. WHS has been at its current location since 1969, and has blossomed into a wonderful educational and community resource for our surrounding neighborhoods.

Guided by dedicated teachers and administrators, students have distinguished themselves in district, state and even national forums, competing admirably in the arts *and* the sciences. Its career pathways and leadership academies engage eager students in a wide variety of disciplines, and an enhanced college prep program guides graduates to future successes.

The Diamond Anniversary celebration begins on **Friday, April 5**, and continues with events through December. WHS plans to invite the entire Waipahu community, all alumni, its many business partners and friends to join the commemoration.

Mark your calendars, and see you there!



Waipahu High School in the State's "LifeSmarts" Consumer Education Contest

The Hawaii State Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs conducted the 9th annual "LifeSmarts" Consumer Education Competition at the State Capitol earlier this month—a brainy battle between teams from **Waipahu High School** and 'Iolani School.

The game-show style competition tested the students on their knowledge of personal finance, health and safety, the environment, technology, and consumer rights and responsibilities.

In the end, 'Iolani emerged victorious—but the two teams from WHS did their school proud. In the photo at right, Waipahu Representative Ty Cullen (far right) and I congratulated the teams on their valiant effort.

Congratulations to the All Stars and GG No Re and their coach Cindy Takara for a job well done!



In alphabetical order: WHS All Stars Rizalie Asumen, Alter Calubana, David Racuya, Gerald Soriano (team captain) and Michael Ugalde, along with WHS Team GG No Re Christian Borromeo, Marjory Cabanlit, Joshua Cambia, Jonnel Leonor and team captain Sam Weinstein.



Winners Circle: pictured above, from left, Rodney Luke, Leeward Complex Area Superintendent; Charlyn Manuyag and Fely Magaoay, Waipahu High School; Jennifer Wong, Kapolei High School; Maria Andrea Jurado and Jastinne Orenia, Waipahu; and Michael Sana, Leeward District Science Fair Director and WHS science teacher.

Visits to State Facilities Bring Unexpected Treats . . .

During my visits to schools, hospitals, parks, and other state buildings and grounds, I am on the lookout not only for repair and maintenance issues that need state funding through our annual construction budget. I am also eager to meet our state workers who use and maintain these facilities. The folks in the field are a wealth of information and inspiration as we tour, excited to share their successes *and* the challenges they face.

So it was on one day when I visited **Kaleiopuu Elementary**, where Principal **Vernon Young** laid out his priorities for a better learning environment for his students. And later at **Waipahu High School**, we encountered future science fair winners **Neil Garcia** and **Ina Deloso** (at right), working in **Michael Sana's** science class to build a DNA model in a box. They inspire us to invest state dollars wisely as we prioritize our projects each year.



Leeward Science Fair Winners Score Honors for Waipahu High

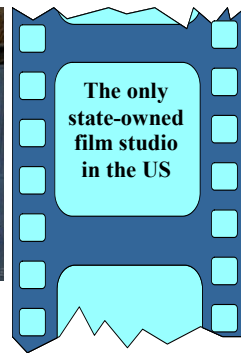
Nearly two dozen students from Waipahu High School won recognition for their outstanding team and individual research projects at this month's 28th Leeward District Science and Engineering Fair.

The overall Top Team Senior Research Award winners are **Charlyn Manuyag** and **Fely Magaoay**, both proud members of the WHS Class of 2014.

For their achievement they will represent Hawaii and the Leeward District at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in Phoenix, Arizona in May. Jennifer Wong of Kapolei High School won the Individual Senior Research Award and will join them.

The Director's Award went to WHS students **Maria Andrea Jurado** and **Justinne Orenia**.

Congratulations to everyone who participated for jobs well done!



As Vice Chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, I am responsible for putting together the Senate’s budget plan for State projects that will be funded for construction, repairs and maintenance. I have toured facilities statewide to see first hand the wide variety of properties the state owns and must maintain.

Earlier this month, several Senators toured the **State Film Studios** adjacent to Kapiolani Community College and Diamond Head. The film industry brings in millions of dollars in revenues to Hawaii each year, but the studios are in need of major repair and renovation work.

Later that day, we visited the State’s **Foreign Trade Zone** warehouses along the Honolulu waterfront, also seeking funds this year for needed upgrades.

In the photos above: upper left, Hawaii Film Commissioner Donne Dawson, Senator Suzanne Chun-Oakland and I are in an old warehouse filled with props from the various TV shows that have used the studios since the 1970s. Upper right, Commissioner Dawson explains the layout of the state’s 7.5 acres property to Senators in front of the Production Offices, now being used by staff from the film *Hunger Games*. Lower left, along with Senators Chun-Oakland and Brickwood Galuteria, we are in the main sound stage building with 16,500 square feet of available space —barely adequate for television productions, but often now used for major feature films as well.

The Senate Committee on Education held a hearing in late January to receive an update on the *Race to the Top* education improvement challenge. That sounds straightforward enough, but it was out of the ordinary in at least one respect. It was the first time the new teleconference system was used to receive live video testimony from a neighbor island. In the photo at right, we heard from Principal Chad Farias at Keaau Elementary on the Big Island.



Star Struck! It’s hard to resist being photographed with celebrities, and cameras were everywhere earlier this month as Steven Tyler, lead singer with the band *Aerosmith*, and drummer Mick Fleetwood of the band *Fleetwood Mac* were at the Capitol. Both musicians have homes on Maui, and they came to testify on a bill regarding privacy in circumstances where there is a reasonable expectation that their personal activities not be photographed. Tyler and Fleetwood, along with attorney Dina LaPolt (photo at right) testified on SB 465 before the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill has not been scheduled for further action.

Legislature's funding contributes to public/private partnership for Waipio Neighborhood Park

It was a true pleasure to join with community leaders, several of my colleagues in the Legislature, and private agencies who all contributed to the construction of a first class batting cage at Waipio Neighborhood Park.

So many elements came together to make this a real success story, and we are grateful to contributing partners including **Waipio Little League, Albert C. Kobayashi, Inc., Ironworkers Union, Ushijima Architects, engineering consultants KSF, Inc., Hawaiian Cement, Zippy's and Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell.**

Special thanks to the generous donation from the **Shane Victorino Foundation** that matched the legislature's allocation of funds in the amount of \$25,000 to complete the project. Shane is of course well known as one of the most successful major league baseball players from Hawaii, and he was on hand personally to dedicate the cage that now bears his name. It will be an inspiration to future generations of youngsters who practice and play at this park that has already been home field to champions.



Photos by Johnelle Souza



Tax season is here and many Hawaii residents are looking for filing assistance. The good news is that volunteers are standing by to help. Now through April 11, AARP-trained and IRS-certified volunteers are available throughout the state to help prepare basic federal and state tax forms for low-to-moderate income individuals and families. **In our area help is available from 9 a.m. to noon Tuesdays at Waipahu Civic Center on Mokuola Street.**

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide is the nation's largest, free, volunteer-run tax preparation and assistance service for low and moderate-income taxpayers, with special attention to people age 60 and older. Last year in Hawaii, Tax-Aide volunteers helped 15,745 clients file federal and state returns free of charge.

In February 2012, state attorneys general and the federal government announced a historic joint state-federal settlement with the country's five largest mortgage servicers: **Ally/GMAC, Bank of America, Citi, JPMorgan Chase and Wells Fargo.**

Distressed homeowners who may have had their mortgages improperly foreclosed or who may have had difficulty when attempting to refinance their underwater mortgages may be eligible for relief as a result of this landmark settlement.

The State Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs has begun an advertising campaign to help answer questions about how Hawaii borrowers can be helped. The ad campaign also warns consumers about possible scams that surface when unscrupulous predators falsely claim they can help.

Visit the DCCA Web site – HFIC.Hawaii.gov – or call 587-3222 for answers to questions you may have.



HAWAII FORECLOSURE
INFORMATION CENTER

Learn more about foreclosure options, how you might qualify for mortgage modifications and how you can save yourself from mortgage rescue fraud through the State's new foreclosure resource. Go to:

HFIC.Hawaii.gov