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## HOUSE RESOLUTION

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URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO ESTABLISH AN INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 21, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES, TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGATIONS OF A JANUARY 20, 2022 PAYMENT FROM AN UNKNOWN INDIVIDUAL TO AN "INFLUENTIAL STATE LEGISLATOR" FOR THE PURPORTED USE IN AN EXISTING CAMPAIGN AT THE TIME, AND TO EXAMINE POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS OF STATE LAW, THE STATE ETHICS CODE, AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE PROVISIONS.

1 WHEREAS, on March 27, 2025, Honolulu Civil Beat published a  
2 news story titled "FBI Recorded Hawaii Lawmaker Being Given  
3 \$35,000," which included a document filed in the United States  
4 District Court for the District of Hawaii on March 24, 2023 by  
5 the United States Attorney's Office ("Government's Motion for a  
6 Downward Departure") that was formerly sealed and improperly  
7 redacted which stated in paragraph six that in 2022 former State  
8 Representative Ty Cullen, acting in cooperation with federal  
9 law-enforcement authorities, made an undercover recording of an  
10 unknown individual providing "an influential state legislator"  
11 with approximately \$35,000 for the purported use in "an existing  
12 campaign"; and  
13

14 WHEREAS, to date, it appears no federal criminal charges  
15 have been filed against the "influential state legislator,"  
16 whose identity remains undisclosed and who may still be serving  
17 as a member of the Hawaii State Legislature; and  
18

19 WHEREAS, a member of the House of Representatives from the  
20 Twenty-sixth Representative District, Representative Della Au  
21 Belatti, wrote a letter to Acting United States Attorney Kenneth  
22 M. Sorenson on May 19, 2025 stating in part: "It has been over  
23 three years since your office learned about the unnamed  
24 influential state legislator who received the \$35,000 on January  
25 20, 2022. In the interest of justice, accountability, and to  
26 promote good government, I respectfully request you, as the



1 Acting United States Attorney, release information from your  
2 office's investigations immediately"; and

3  
4 WHEREAS, Representative Belatti and the Representative from  
5 the Forty-third Representative District, Representative Kanani  
6 Souza, wrote an inquiry letter to the Attorney General's Office,  
7 the Campaign Spending Commission, and the Hawaii State Ethics  
8 Commission dated July 20, 2025; and

9  
10 WHEREAS, the July 20, 2025 letter to the Attorney General's  
11 Office, the Campaign Spending Commission, and the Hawaii State  
12 Ethics Commission stated in part: "Following Representative  
13 Belatti's letter to Mr. Sorenson, which was also sent to your  
14 offices, she met with him to discuss his office's policies  
15 regarding the possible release of investigative reports to other  
16 law enforcement agencies. He indicated during that meeting that  
17 if there were state law enforcement officials interested in  
18 these reports, a request could be made directly to his office  
19 and/or the Federal Bureau of Investigation"; and

20  
21 WHEREAS, Representatives Belatti and Souza received written  
22 correspondence thereafter from the Campaign Spending Commission  
23 dated July 22, 2025, the Attorney General's office dated July  
24 23, 2025, and the Hawaii State Ethics Commission dated July 31,  
25 2025; and

26  
27 WHEREAS, in particular, the July 23, 2025 letter from the  
28 Attorney General to Representatives Belatti and Souza stated in  
29 part: "Should Acting United States Attorney Kenneth M. Sorenson  
30 deem that state law enforcement assistance with any federal  
31 investigation is appropriate, I have every confidence he will  
32 make that request"; and

33  
34 WHEREAS, the Speaker of the House, Nadine K. Nakamura,  
35 wrote letters to the Attorney General dated November 7, 2025 and  
36 the Acting United States Attorney dated November 7, 2025  
37 regarding the \$35,000 payment; and

38  
39 WHEREAS, the Speaker of the House stated in her November 7,  
40 2025 letter to the Attorney General the following in part:  
41 "Given the seriousness of the allegations and the potential



1 involvement of a current member of the Legislature, I  
2 respectfully request that your office review the attached  
3 filing, and any other available data, to determine whether any  
4 Hawai'i state laws may have been violated. I recognize that a  
5 federal investigation may still be ongoing, and my request is  
6 not intended to interfere with or duplicate federal efforts.  
7 However, if warranted, I ask that you consider initiating an  
8 appropriate investigation or referral to the relevant division  
9 within your department, in coordination with federal authorities  
10 as necessary"; and  
11

12 WHEREAS, the Attorney General responded to the November 7,  
13 2025 letter from the Speaker of the House in a letter dated  
14 November 13, 2025, which states in part: "I have every  
15 confidence that the Office of the United States Attorney is  
16 thoroughly investigating the matter referenced in your letter.  
17 To the extent that the Department of the Attorney General can  
18 assist in that effort, we welcome that wholeheartedly. The  
19 Department of the Attorney General has forged a strong  
20 partnership with the Office of the United States Attorney and  
21 federal law enforcement. My Department's Special Investigation  
22 and Prosecution Division was created by the Legislature, in  
23 part, to investigate public-integrity and corruption crimes, and  
24 some of its Deputy Attorneys General are specially designated  
25 Assistant United States Attorneys. However, we cannot take any  
26 investigative steps that could potentially undermine or  
27 interfere with that active federal investigation"; and  
28

29 WHEREAS, the Speaker of the House inquired in her November  
30 7, 2025 letter to the Acting United States Attorney the  
31 following in part: "1. Is the federal investigation referenced  
32 in the March 24, 2023 filing still active? 2. Would parallel  
33 investigations by state authorities complement or potentially  
34 interfere with your office's work?"; and  
35

36 WHEREAS, the United States Attorney responded to the  
37 November 7, 2025 letter from the Speaker of the House in a  
38 letter dated November 10, 2025, which states in part: "You have  
39 asked two questions: 1. Is the federal investigation referenced  
40 in the March 24, 2023 filing still active? As we have publicly  
41 represented to the District Court in related FOIA litigation,



1 *our investigation is active. 2. Would parallel investigations by*  
2 *state authorities compliment or potentially interfere with your*  
3 *office's work? At this point a parallel investigation by state*  
4 *authorities would potentially interfere with our investigation";*  
5 *and*

6  
7 WHEREAS, on or about January 5, 2026, former Federal  
8 Defender Alexander Silvert, a member of the public, submitted a  
9 petition to the Speaker of the House pursuant to House Rule 46,  
10 requesting that the House of Representatives, under its  
11 authority provided by Chapter 21, Hawaii Revised Statutes,  
12 convene an investigative committee to look into the \$35,000  
13 payment; and

14  
15 WHEREAS, Silvert also submitted the same petition to the  
16 Senate requesting that the President of the Senate, pursuant to  
17 Senate Rule 67, under its authority provided by Chapter 21,  
18 Hawaii Revised Statutes, convene an investigative committee to  
19 look into the \$35,000 payment; and

20  
21 WHEREAS, the petition included 929 Hawaii resident  
22 signatures; and

23  
24 WHEREAS, on January 7, 2026, the Attorney General of the  
25 State of Hawaii announced in a press release that the Attorney  
26 General and the United States Attorney's office agreed that a  
27 parallel state investigation regarding the \$35,000 payment  
28 recipient would interfere with the ongoing federal  
29 investigation; and

30  
31 WHEREAS, on January 14, 2026, Representatives Belatti and  
32 Souza, in addition to several other Representatives, wrote a  
33 letter to Governor Josh Green stating in part: "We are writing  
34 to request that you invoke your statutory power under Hawai'i  
35 Revised Statutes (HRS) § 28-2.5(a) to direct the Attorney  
36 General of the State of Hawai'i, Anne Lopez, to  
37 immediately investigate the matter regarding the \$35,000 payment  
38 that was provided to an unknown state legislator in 2022 which  
39 was secretly recorded by former State Representative Ty  
40 Cullen and made public in March of 2025"; and



1 WHEREAS, on January 14, 2026, Representatives Belatti and  
2 Souza, in addition to several other Representatives, wrote a  
3 letter to Acting United States Attorney Kenneth M. Sorenson  
4 stating in part the following: "In light of this constitutional  
5 obligation to the people of Hawai'i and inasmuch as we respect  
6 your duties and responsibilities, we ask that you respect our  
7 constitutional obligations and answer the one question listed  
8 below by Friday, January 16, 2026, so that we can appropriately  
9 and timely address this matter when our legislative session  
10 begins next week: Is the legislator who accepted the \$35,000 in  
11 a paper bag a current sitting legislator?"; and  
12

13 WHEREAS, on January 20, 2026, Representatives Belatti and  
14 Souza, in addition to several other Representatives, wrote a  
15 letter to the Speaker of the House and the House Chief Attorney,  
16 Reese Nakamura, stating in part: "Because of the importance of  
17 these matters, please respond in writing to the following  
18 questions at least 72 hours in advance of the Petition being  
19 presented to the House pursuant to House Rule 46.2: (1) When  
20 will the Petition be presented to the House pursuant to House  
21 Rule 46.2? (2) What are the procedures and rules that apply to  
22 the deliberation and decisionmaking by the entire House on the  
23 Petition and its request for the House to conduct a limited  
24 investigation into the conduct of the legislator who accepted  
25 \$35,000?"; and  
26

27 WHEREAS, on January 20, 2026, Representative Belatti  
28 received a phone call from the Acting United States Attorney  
29 informing her that the Attorney General was commencing an  
30 investigation regarding the \$35,000 payment; and  
31

32 WHEREAS, on January 20, 2026, the Attorney General of the  
33 State of Hawaii reversed course and announced in a press release  
34 that its office has initiated an investigation regarding the  
35 \$35,000 payment following an agreement by federal authorities to  
36 share evidence; and  
37

38 WHEREAS, upholding the doctrine of separation of powers, the  
39 executive branch has separate and distinct duties from the  
40 legislative branch; and  
41



1 WHEREAS, Hawaii Revised Statutes §28-2.5 Investigations(a)  
2 states the following: "The attorney general shall investigate  
3 alleged violations of the law when directed to do so by the  
4 governor, or when the attorney general determines that an  
5 investigation would be in the public interest"; and  
6

7 WHEREAS, Chapter 21, Hawaii Revised Statutes, authorizes  
8 either chamber of the Legislature to establish investigative  
9 committees vested with the power to issue subpoenas, administer  
10 oaths, compel the production of documents, and hold individuals  
11 in contempt if they fail to comply with a subpoena, among other  
12 powers; and  
13

14 WHEREAS, Hawaii Revised Statutes §21-3(b) Establishment of  
15 investigating committees by legislature, states the following:  
16 "The concurrent or single house resolution or statute  
17 establishing an investigating committee shall state the  
18 committee's purposes, powers, duties and duration, the subject  
19 matter and scope of its investigatory authority, and the number  
20 of its members"; and  
21

22 WHEREAS, the investigative committee's purpose is to (1)  
23 investigate the alleged 2022 transaction involving the delivery  
24 of \$35,000 in cash or checks from an unknown individual to an  
25 unidentified "influential state legislator," (2) determine  
26 whether any state criminal statutes, campaign finance laws,  
27 ethics rules, or other laws were violated by any individual  
28 involved, (3) Examine the adequacy of existing laws, rules, and  
29 enforcement mechanisms intended to prevent corruption, bribery,  
30 improper influence, or misuse of campaign funds, (4) Receive  
31 testimony, compel the attendance of witnesses, require the  
32 production of records and documents, and conduct public hearings  
33 in accordance with Chapter 21, Hawaii Revised Statutes; (5)  
34 Prepare findings and recommendations, including legislative  
35 proposals to strengthen anti-corruption safeguards, increase  
36 transparency, and improve ethical oversight within state  
37 government; and (6) Refer any evidence of potential criminal,  
38 civil, or administrative violations to the Attorney General, the  
39 Hawaii State Ethics Commission, the Campaign Spending  
40 Commission, or any other appropriate authority; and  
41



1 WHEREAS, the investigative committee's powers shall include  
2 the entire scope of the investigative committee's authority  
3 under Chapter 21, Hawaii Revised Statutes; and  
4

5 WHEREAS, the investigative committee's duties shall include  
6 the investigation of the facts and circumstances surrounding the  
7 \$35,000 payment through its powers established under Chapter 21,  
8 Hawaii Revised Statutes, prepare findings and recommendations,  
9 and refer any evidence of potential criminal, civil, or  
10 administrative violations to the Attorney General, the Hawaii  
11 State Ethics Commission, the Campaign Spending Commission, or  
12 any other appropriate authority; and  
13

14 WHEREAS, the investigative committee shall exist until the  
15 completion of its duties, with no definitive time frame; and  
16

17 WHEREAS, the subject matter and scope of the investigative  
18 committee's investigatory authority shall encompass the facts  
19 and circumstances regarding the \$35,000 payment that was  
20 provided in a brown paper bag to the unknown state legislator;  
21 and  
22

23 WHEREAS, the investigative committee shall consist of five  
24 members, of which one member shall serve as the chairperson. At  
25 least one member from the minority party shall serve on the  
26 investigative committee; and  
27

28 WHEREAS, it is possible that the \$35,000 payment recipient  
29 may be a sitting member of the legislature or a former member of  
30 the legislature working in the executive branch of state  
31 government; and  
32

33 WHEREAS, Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure, 2020  
34 Edition, adopted as the parliamentary authority of the House  
35 under House Rule 61, states in Chapter 74, Section 796, Part 1  
36 Investigations Respecting Members: "Either house of the  
37 legislature has the power to investigate and institute an  
38 inquiry into the truth of an alleged bribery of any of its  
39 members or the members of a previous legislature connected with  
40 its legislative functions. In the exercise of such power, it  
41 must necessarily have the same power to compel the attendance of



1 witnesses before it or before a committee and compel them to  
2 testify as in any other investigation"; and

3  
4 WHEREAS, Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure, 2020  
5 Edition, adopted as the parliamentary authority of the House,  
6 states in Chapter 74, Section 798, Part 3 Method of  
7 Investigation by a Legislative Body: "Where the legislature has  
8 constitutional power to institute an investigation, the manner  
9 of conducting such investigation rests on the sound discretion  
10 of the legislature"; and

11  
12 WHEREAS, Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure, 2020  
13 Edition, adopted as the parliamentary authority of the House,  
14 states in Chapter 75, Section 805, Part 5 Maintaining Order in  
15 Legislative Bodies: "A legislative body has the right to  
16 regulate its own halls"; and

17  
18 WHEREAS, transparency and oversight are essential  
19 components of ethical governance and are necessary to preserve  
20 public trust and ensure adherence to the rule of law; now,  
21 therefore,

22  
23 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the  
24 Thirty-third Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session  
25 of 2026, that the House of Representatives establishes an  
26 Investigative Committee pursuant to Chapter 21, Hawaii Revised  
27 Statutes to:

- 28  
29 (1) Investigate the alleged 2022 transaction  
30 involving the delivery of \$35,000 in cash or  
31 checks from an unknown individual to an  
32 unidentified "influential state legislator";  
33  
34 (2) Determine whether any state criminal statutes,  
35 campaign finance laws, ethics rules, or other  
36 laws were violated by any individual involved;  
37  
38 (3) Examine the adequacy of existing laws, rules, and  
39 enforcement mechanisms intended to prevent  
40 corruption, bribery, improper influence, or  
41 misuse of campaign funds;





- 1  
2 (4) Receive testimony, compel the attendance of  
3 witnesses, require the production of records and  
4 documents, and conduct public hearings in  
5 accordance with Chapter 21, Hawaii Revised  
6 Statutes;  
7  
8 (5) Prepare findings and recommendations, including  
9 legislative proposals to strengthen anti-  
10 corruption safeguards, increase transparency, and  
11 improve ethical oversight within state  
12 government; and  
13  
14 (6) Refer any evidence of potential criminal, civil,  
15 or administrative violations to the Attorney  
16 General, the Hawaii State Ethics Commission, the  
17 Campaign Spending Commission, or any other  
18 appropriate authority; and  
19

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Speaker of the House of  
21 Representatives shall appoint the members of the investigative  
22 committee, designate the chairperson, and authorize the  
23 committee to employ staff, legal counsel, or other resources  
24 necessary to carry out its duties; and  
25

26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
27 Resolution be transmitted to the President of the Senate, the  
28 Attorney General, the Hawaii State Ethics Commission, the  
29 Campaign Spending Commission, and the United States Attorney for  
30 the District of Hawaii.  
31  
32  
33

OFFERED BY:

*Kanani Souza*  
JAN 30 2026

