
HOUSE RESOLUTION

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

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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

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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

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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

41



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
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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 Statues §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 Statues; and

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

12 WHEREAS, the investigative committee shall exist until the
13 completion of its duties, with no definitive time frame; and

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

19 WHEREAS, the investigative committee shall consist of five
20 members, of which one member shall serve as the chairperson. At
21 least one member from the minority party shall serve on the
22 investigative committee; and

23 WHEREAS, it is possible that the \$35,000 payment recipient
24 may be a sitting member of the legislature or a former member of
25 the legislature working in the executive branch of state
26 government; and

27 WHEREAS, Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure, 2020
28 Edition, adopted as the parliamentary authority of the House
29 under House Rule 61, states in Chapter 74, Section 796, Part 1
30 Investigations Respecting Members: "Either house of the
31 legislature has the power to investigate and institute an
32 inquiry into the truth of an alleged bribery of any of its
33 members or the members of a previous legislature connected with
34 its legislative functions. In the exercise of such power, it
35 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;



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

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the President of the Senate, the Attorney General, the Hawaii State Ethics Commission, the Campaign Spending Commission, and the United States Attorney for the District of Hawaii.

OFFERED BY:

JAN 30 2026

