



STATE OF HAWAII
CAMPAIGN SPENDING COMMISSION

235 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET, ROOM 300
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

February 2, 2026

TO: The Honorable Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

The Honorable Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Members of the House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

FROM: Kristin Izumi-Nitao, Executive Director
Campaign Spending Commission KEI

SUBJECT: **Testimony on H.B. No. 2053, Relating to Campaign Contributions.**
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.¹ The Campaign Spending Commission ("Commission") supports this bill.

In 2022, the Legislature passed Act 283 which prohibits elected officials from holding fundraisers during any regular or special session of the state Legislature. See Hawaii Revised Statutes ("HRS") §11-342(c). It is common for elected officials to receive contributions outside of any formal fundraising event. This measure seeks to close a loophole in the law by amending HRS §11-357 to prohibit elected officials from also soliciting or accepting campaign contributions during the same time period. This bill will prevent the corruption and/or the appearance of corruption of elected officials.

The Commission requests that this committee pass this measure.

¹ The companion bill is S.B. No. 2531.



COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Chair David A. Tarnas, Vice Chair Mahina Poepoe
Tuesday, February 3, 2:00 PM HST
Conference Room 325 & Videoconference State Capitol

HB2053 – Pertaining to Banning Campaign Contributions During Legislative Session

TESTIMONY

Gabriela Schneider, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters Hawaii supports HB2053 with a request for an amendment. The bill prohibits state and county elected officials from soliciting and accepting campaign contributions during any regular or special session of the state legislature, including any extension of any regular or special session or any legislative recess day, holiday, or weekend.

The League of Women Voters has consistently recognized that accepting contributions while legislating creates the reality or appearance that the political process favors significant contributors, eroding public trust in an accountable government.

Hawaii's current approach has failed. Despite the 2022 fundraising event ban, legislators still accepted over \$500,000 in contributions during session.[1] This demonstrates that banning events alone is insufficient to address the fundamental conflict of interest created when legislators solicit and accept campaign money while actively considering legislation.

There is precedent for restricting the solicitation and acceptance of campaign contributions during legislative sessions in other states. Alaska, Indiana, and Georgia ban lawmakers from accepting donations from anyone during a session, and Colorado prohibits donations from lobbyists when lawmakers are meeting or when legislation is pending before the governor. [2] As the League of Women Voters has stated in its national position on Money in Politics [3], political corruption includes when “an officeholder votes or works to support policies that reflect the preferences of individuals or organizations in order to attract contributions from them.” Donations to sitting legislators during the session create the appearance or even the regrettable actuality of influencing a legislator's votes by large donations, particularly when solicited through targeted communications that reference specific bills or issues before the legislature.

We note that routine grassroots fundraising mechanisms like a donation page on a legislator's website may remain acceptable, so we request an amendment to the legislation to allow for this. On the other hand, active solicitation of contributions to special interests during session, especially when coupled with references to pending legislation, creates the appearance or reality that legislative decisions favor significant contributors rather than constituents.

Please pass HB2053 to help ensure that legislators focus on policymaking, not fundraising, when the legislature is in session.

Mahalo for your consideration.

[1] Blaze Lovell, "Ban On In-Session Campaign Donations Gets Thumbs Up From Hawaii Standards Commission," *Honolulu Civil Beat*, October 20, 2022,
<https://www.civilbeat.org/2022/10/ban-on-in-session-campaign-donations-gets-thumbs-up-from-hawaii-standards-commission/>.

[2] Andrew Oxford, "Lawmakers want to close loophole in law that bans campaign contributions during session," *KUNM*, February 13, 2023,
<https://www.kunm.org/local-news/2023-02-15/lawmakers-want-to-close-loophole-in-law-that-bans-campaign-contributions-during-session>

[3] League of Women Voters, "Position on Money in Politics (National)"
<https://lwvc.org/position/position-money-politics/>

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HAWAII
P.O. Box 235026 ♦ Honolulu, HI 96823
Voicemail 808.377.6727 ♦ my.lwv.org/hawaii ♦ voters@lwvhi.org

February 1, 2026

To: Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice-Chair
Committee Members
Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs (JHA)
Hawaii State House of Representatives

Fr: Ms. Janel Fujinaka, At-Large Board Member
Makiki Neighborhood Board
1535 Pensacola St Apt#37
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

Aloha Chair Rep. David A. Tarnas, Vice Chair Rep. Mahina Poepoe, and Members of the Committee:

As a member of the Makiki Neighborhood Board, I am submitting this testimony in my capacity as a private citizen and not as a representative of the board. I **strongly oppose HB2053**. While regulating campaign contributions may seem reasonable on the surface, this bill creates significant barriers for candidates who are committed to serving their communities. Limiting contributions and restricting fundraising during legislative sessions disproportionately affects grassroots leaders, particularly those without extensive networks or access to large donors, making it more difficult to run competitive campaigns.

Rather than leveling the playing field, this legislation may inadvertently favor incumbents or candidates with established resources, limiting opportunities for new voices and diverse perspectives in government. Running a campaign requires transparent, legal support to engage voters, organize volunteers, and communicate effectively, essential elements of a healthy and functioning democracy.

HB2053, rather than strengthening elections, risks weakening community representation and discouraging civic participation. I respectfully urge the committee to **oppose HB2053**.

Mahalo for your consideration,



Ms. Janel S. Fujinaka
At-Large Member
Makiki Neighborhood Board

HB-2053

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 3:29:04 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kendall Krumm	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB2053 proposes to ban all solicitation of donations during the legislative session. This would be harmful to grassroots campaigns that rely on small, ongoing donations rather than large fundraising events and wealthy donors.

It could prevent candidates from including a donation link in update emails, and keeping an online donation page live. This level of solicitation is not same concerns as in-session fundraising events.

The bill's application to county officials also raises concerns, as it is unclear how a legislative-session ban would logically or fairly apply to officials who are not participating in the state legislative process.

For these reasons, we are asking that HB2053 be deferred, or at minimum amended to narrowly prohibit the holding of fundraising events during session, rather than imposing a blanket ban on solicitation.

HB-2053

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 4:44:35 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Members,

I'm writing to oppose HB2053. It may be well-intentioned, but this would be harmful to grassroots campaigns that rely on small, ongoing donations rather than large fundraising events and wealthy donors.

It could prevent candidates from including a donation link in update emails, and keeping an online donation page live. This level of solicitation is not same concerns as in-session fundraising events.

The bill's application to county officials also raises concerns, as it is unclear how a legislative-session ban would logically or fairly apply to officials who are not participating in the state legislative process.

For these reasons, I ask that HB2053 be deferred, or at minimum amended to narrowly prohibit the holding of fundraising events during session, rather than imposing a blanket ban on solicitation.

Mahlo for your consideration.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

HB-2053

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 7:37:52 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cristina Holt	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting testimony in opposition to HB2053.

HB2053 proposes a blanket ban on solicitation of donations during the legislative session. This would be harmful to grassroots campaigns that rely on small, ongoing donations rather than large fundraising events or wealthy donors.

As written, this bill could prevent candidates from including a donation link in routine update emails or even keeping an online donation page active during session. That kind of passive solicitation does not raise the same concerns as in-session fundraising events, yet it would be treated the same under this bill.

The bill's application to county officials also raises serious concerns. It is unclear how a legislative-session fundraising ban logically or fairly applies to officials who are not participating in the state legislative process at all.

For these reasons, I urge you to defer HB2053, or at minimum amend it to narrowly prohibit fundraising events during session rather than imposing a broad ban on all solicitation.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

HB-2053

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 7:41:37 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diann Karin Lynn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I absolutely support prohibiting state and county elected officials from soliciting or accepting campaign contributions during any Regular Session or Special Session of the state Legislature.

HB-2053

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:46:55 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kahi Pacarro	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I ask you defer or edit this bill. Grassroots politicians rely on small donations, often times on a recurring basis. This would hamstring the work of smaller politicians relying on small donations and benefit those with ties to larger donors like corporations and lobbying groups.

HB-2053

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 10:59:00 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stacey Alapai	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing to oppose this bill in its current form. I agree with the intention to limit fundraising events during legislative session, but feel the way the bill is currently worded could have unintended consequences that negatively impact grassroots candidates who rely on small, ongoing donations rather than large fundraising events and wealthy donors.

It could prevent candidates from including a donation link in update emails, and keeping an online donation page live. This level of solicitation is not same concerns as in-session fundraising events. The bill's application to county officials also raises concerns, as it is unclear how a legislative-session ban would logically or fairly apply to officials who are not participating in the state legislative process.

Please defer HB2053 or add amendments to narrowly prohibit the holding of fundraising events during session, rather than imposing a blanket ban on solicitation.

Mahalo

HB-2053

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 12:35:35 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gregory Misakian	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the JHA Committee,

While I believe the intent of HB2053 is to deter potential campaign donations that may influence legislation during the session, it's 100% clear that campaign donations meant to influence legislation will continue to get in the hands of legislators and committee chairs before the session begins, unless more robust legislation is enacted.

Additionally, HB2053 is not fair to ALL candidates, as it only applies to elected officials, and the addition of county elected officials is also another segregation of a group.

Here is your opportunity to take this bill proposal and amend it, to make it something worthy of the trust of the residents of Hawaii.

Gregory Misakian

HB-2053

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 1:24:08 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jackie Keefe	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

I oppose HB2053.

HB2053 proposes to ban all solicitation of donations during the legislative session. This would be harmful to grassroots campaigns that rely on small, ongoing donations rather than large fundraising events and wealthy donors.

It could prevent candidates from including a donation link in update emails, and keeping an online donation page live. This level of solicitation is not same concerns as in-session fundraising events.

The bill's application to county officials also raises concerns, as it is unclear how a legislative-session ban would logically or fairly apply to officials who are not participating in the state legislative process.

For these reasons, we are asking that HB2053 be deferred, or at minimum amended to narrowly prohibit the holding of fundraising events during session, rather than imposing a blanket ban on solicitation.

Mahalo,

Jackie Keefe, Lahaina

HB-2053

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 1:58:43 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/3/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aria Juliet Castillo	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I share the Campaign Spending Commission's goal of reducing undue influence and ensuring public trust in our democratic process. However, I have concerns that HB2053, as currently drafted, would unintentionally harm elected officials who have pledged not to accept corporate money and rely on small-dollar donations.

HB2053 proposes a blanket prohibition on the solicitation of campaign donations during the legislative session. For grassroots campaigns, solicitation often does not involve in-session fundraising events or access-driven activities. Instead, it includes keeping an online donation page active, sharing a donation link in an email update, or accepting small contributions from everyday residents who are responding to issues unfolding during the session.

Treating these low-dollar, passive forms of solicitation the same as in-session fundraising events would disproportionately disadvantage candidates without access to personal wealth or established donor networks, while doing little to curb the kinds of influence this bill is trying to address.

I also respectfully raise concerns about the bill's application to county officials, as it is unclear how a legislative-session ban would logically apply to officials who are not participating in the state legislative process.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that HB2053 be deferred, or amended to narrowly prohibit the holding of fundraising events during legislative session, rather than imposing a broad ban on all solicitation. I believe such an approach would better align with the Commission's mission while preserving equitable access for grassroots candidates.

Thank you for your consideration.

Aria Juliet Castillo

Kailua, HI