



**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 

SUBJECT: **Testimony on H.B. No. 2055, Relating to the Campaign Spending Commission.**
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.

The Commission oversees 700+ committees that have anywhere from 1-3 officers who contact the Commission for assistance. Over the years, the number of candidate committees has almost doubled from 300 to over 550 and the number of noncandidate committees has grown from 200 to over 300. These numbers continue to increase rather than decrease with each election period. Of significance is that with each election, there are hundreds of new candidates and noncandidate committees that do not understand how to comply with the various requirements of campaign finance law (e.g., registering; filing disclosure reports, fundraiser notices, electioneering communications, etc.; having disclaimers on advertising; reporting contributions, expenditures, loans, durable assets, etc.; terminating registration) thereby generating hundreds of staff hours assisting committees over the phone, in-person, and by email as well as a number of enforcement actions for violations. Depending on whether it is an election year (which is in every even-numbered year), these 700+ committees file anywhere from 2-8 mandatory reports with the Commission and the number of reports will increase in specific situations (i.e., public funding, late contributions/ expenditures).

¹ The companion bill is S.B. No. 2533.

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As a result of the 12 campaign finance bills that were enacted from the 2023 legislative session, the volume and scale of Commission staff duties have significantly increased. In the last fiscal year, close to 200 enforcement actions were initiated by the Commission. However, despite the increased duties and responsibilities, current Commission staff salaries remain below those of comparable offices performing similar duties across the state such as Hawaii State Ethics Commission, Office of the Auditor, Office of the Ombudsman, and Legislative Reference Bureau. Without competitive compensation, the Commission risks losing experienced personnel to better-paying agencies which would undermine the continuity and effectiveness of our services.

Additional funding would bring existing staff salaries in line with similar government offices who have compliance and enforcement duties. This adjustment is essential not only to recognize the value of our current staff but also to ensure equity, stability, and sustained excellence as we expand our program. The Commissioners are aware of this disparity because staff salaries are compared with similar government offices during performance evaluations; however, due to the Commission's limited budget, there has not been an opportunity to fix compensation commensurate with performance. As such, this request is to address this disparity on a more permanent basis.

The Commission respectfully requests that this committee pass this measure.



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

HB2055 – Pertaining to Pay for the Campaign Spending Commission

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 HB2055 to increase the salaries of the Campaign Spending Commission's staff to align with the compensation levels of similar legislative-branch agencies.

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that methods of financing political campaigns should protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns; ensure the public's right to know who is using money to influence elections; and enable candidates to compete equitably for public office.

In Hawaii, the Campaign Spending Commission (CSC) has major responsibility for ensuring that election campaigns meet these standards. CSC maintains a detailed and widely useful database to enable citizens and government officials to see and understand data on campaign spending. Political candidates must abide by numerous laws, regulations and schedules. The CSC not only tracks the compliance with these requirements for every candidate, they help candidates understand these requirements. The CSC monitors hundreds of candidates statewide.

Paying CSC staff competitively strengthens the CSC's capacity to effectively fulfill its oversight duties and impartially carry out its responsibilities. Notably, this bill will close the pay gap between the CSC and counterparts in the executive branch and private sector. Better pay goes beyond being fair: it grows the pipeline to recruit competent public servants who will be less inclined to be lured by financially attractive outside employment, retaining critical institutional knowledge.

Please pass HB2055 and work to ensure the CSC is adequately funded so it has the capacity to do its important work, can recruit and retain experienced staff with competitive salaries, and strengthens its support for its workforce. This legislation would help secure the highest standards of public oversight for the people of Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HAWAII

P.O. Box 235026 ♦ Honolulu, HI 96823

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House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Supports: HB2055
Tuesday February 2nd, at 2 pm; Conference Room 235

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

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) submits testimony in strong support of HB 2055.

We appreciate the important work of the Campaign Spending Commission and the key role it plays in protecting the integrity of our elections. As one of the State's main independent watchdogs, the Commission helps ensure transparency, accountability, and compliance with campaign finance laws that safeguard our democracy.

Public trust in government relies on strong, independent oversight. The Campaign Spending Commission, like the State Ethics Commission, the Auditor, the Office of the Ombudsman, and the Legislative Reference Bureau, has important compliance and enforcement duties that require expertise, independence, and professionalism. However, the Commission's compensation has not kept up with other similar agencies.

HB 2055 recognizes that effective oversight depends on recruiting and keeping experienced, highly qualified staff. Making the Commission's pay equal to that of similar agencies is not just fair; it is necessary for consistent, credible, and effective enforcement of campaign finance laws.

This bill invests in the integrity of Hawai'i's democracy. By strengthening the Campaign Spending Commission, HB 2055 helps keep our elections transparent, accountable, and deserving of public trust.

Anne Frederick
Executive Director