



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 101 HD1**  
NOMINATING JOHN D. WAIHE‘E III FOR INDUCTION INTO THE ALOHA ORDER OF  
MERIT

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ke Kuleana Hawai‘i  
(Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs)

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ka Wai, ‘Āina, a me ka Mo‘omeheu a me nā Hana No‘eau  
(Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts)

Ke Kapikala o Hawai‘i  
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

‘Apelila 17, 2026

1:00PM

Lumi 224

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Aloha e Chairs Richards and Lee, Vice Chairs Lamosao and Inouye, and Members of the Senate Committees on Hawaiian Affairs and Water, Land, Culture and the Arts:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HCR101 HD1**, which nominates former Governor John D. Waihe‘e III for induction into the Aloha Order of Merit. Individuals conferred the lifetime title of "member of the Aloha order of merit" shall have "[a]chieved national or international recognition in their field either by a single event or by the totality of their work that has been either pioneering in their field or that has been outstanding in the long-term" **and** provided "extraordinary service to the State" including by devoting "themselves to the betterment of the State, embodying the concept of the Aloha Spirit." Hawai‘i Revised Statutes §§ 5-7.6(a), (a)(1), (a)(2)(A),(D).

Governor Waihe‘e’s lifelong commitment to the people of Hawai‘i—particularly to the advancement of Native Hawaiian rights—reflects the highest ideals of public service and is truly extraordinary. His personal dedication to serve others embodies the Aloha Spirit, and his professional legacy stands as pioneering in the fields of indigenous rights and native self-governance.

As a delegate to the 1978 Constitutional Convention, Governor Waihe‘e played a foundational role in establishing OHA and defining its kuleana as a trust entity advancing Native Hawaiian self-governance. He was instrumental in embedding Native Hawaiian

values, traditions, and rights into the State Constitution—most notably the recognition of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i as an official state language and the protection of traditional and customary practices. His advocacy helped shape OHA’s mission and affirmed meaningful avenues for Native Hawaiians to assert their rights.

Prior to serving as Governor, Waihe‘e also served as a member of the Hawai‘i State House of Representatives including as House Majority Leader, where he played a key role in advancing legislation focused on land use, further defining public trust responsibilities, and promoting a state legislature more accessible to the people.

As our first Native Hawaiian governor, Governor Waihe‘e elevated Native Hawaiian issues and brought them to national prominence. His leadership and collaboration with President Bill Clinton were critical in the enactment of Public Law 103-150, also known as the Apology Resolution. The Apology Resolution was a profound step towards truth, reconciliation, and justice: recognizing and acknowledging the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and the unresolved claims of Native Hawaiians to sovereignty and self-determination. This milestone victory continues to shape and inform Native Hawaiian rights and advocacy on self-governance and ea to this day.

Governor Waihe‘e has also been a steadfast advocate for Native Hawaiian governance beyond his time in elected office, including through his leadership in initiatives such as Kana‘iolowalu, which sought to engage Native Hawaiians in processes of self-determination and nation-building. Following his tenure as Governor, he has continued to serve Hawai‘i with his ongoing leadership in discussions surrounding Native Hawaiian governance and rights.

Governor Waihe‘e’s legacy is one of courage, vision, and unwavering dedication to our lāhui. His work has had a lasting and transformative impact on Hawai‘i and its people. As the first Native Hawaiian Governor of Hawai‘i, his leadership of Hawai‘i at a critical time in our history, now commonly referred to as the “Hawaiian Renaissance,” not only demonstrated that Hawaiians could achieve the highest leadership position in our state but also the importance of grounding governance in aloha for our ‘āina and the lāhui.

From humble beginnings from a small rural town on Hawai'i Island, to being part of the first class of the William S. Richardson School of Law, to becoming the Governor of Hawai'i, Governor Waihe'e is a pioneer that embodied the Aloha Spirit throughout his career. His legacy continues as he remains active in advocating for Hawai'i, Hawaiians, and this 'āina that he loves.

For the reasons stated above, OHA respectfully urges this committee to **PASS HCR 101 HD1.**

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this critical issue.



[www.kalihikapalama.org](http://www.kalihikapalama.org)

April 16, 2026

TESTIMONY OF THE KALIHI PĀLAMA HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUB

IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HCR 101, HD 1  
NOMINATING JOHN D. WAIHE'E III FOR INDUCTION INTO THE ALOHA ORDER OF MERIT

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Kalihi Pālama Hawaiian Civic Club (KPHCC), we respectfully offer our strong and heartfelt support for HCR 101, HD1 which nominates former Governor John D. Waihe'e III for induction into the Aloha Order of Merit.

The Aloha Order of Merit is established in the Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) under Title 1, Chapter 5, Section 5-7.6.

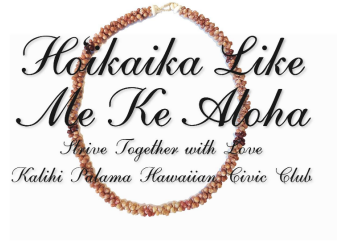
The statute states that honorees shall have: (1) Achieved national or international recognition in their field either by a single event or by the totality of their work that has been either pioneering in their field or that has been outstanding in the long-term; and (2) (A) Contributed to the attainment of statehood for Hawaii; (B) Devoted themselves to the betterment of the State, embodying the concept of the Aloha Spirit; (C) Provided extraordinary service to the State; or (D) Brought honor to the State.

KPHCC believes Governor Waihe'e's lifetime of service reflects the very highest ideals of this recognition.

As outlined in this measure, Governor Waihe'e made history as the first Native Hawaiian elected governor of any state in the United States, a milestone of profound significance not only for Hawai'i, but for indigenous peoples everywhere. His leadership represented more than political achievement—it embodied hope, representation, and the restoration of Native Hawaiian presence in positions of highest governance.

His legacy is both broad and deeply rooted. From his leadership during the 1978 Constitutional Convention—helping to establish the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and elevate 'Ōlelo Hawai'i as an official language—to advancing reconciliation efforts that contributed to the 1993 Apology Resolution, Governor Waihe'e has consistently worked to uplift the lāhui and strengthen Hawai'i's foundation.

At the same time, his administration addressed the needs of all the people of Hawai'i—expanding access to health care through the QUEST program, supporting economic diversification during times of transition, and strengthening education systems locally and nationally. These accomplishments reflect a leader who understood that caring for our people requires both vision and action.



[www.kalihipalama.org](http://www.kalihipalama.org)

Importantly, Governor Waihe'e's service did not end with his time in office. As noted in this resolution, he continues to contribute through civic engagement, public discourse, and leadership on critical issues affecting our State. This lifelong commitment exemplifies what it means to embody the Aloha Spirit—not as a concept, but as a way of living in service to others.

For these reasons, the Kalihi Pālama Hawaiian Civic Club respectfully urges the adoption of HCR 101, HD1 and the induction of Governor John D. Waihe'e III into the Aloha Order of Merit.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Cedric Duarte, President  
Kalihi-Palama Hawaiian Civic Club

**HCR-101-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/16/2026 11:03:28 AM

Testimony for HWN on 4/17/2026 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Leimomi Khan	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I continue to support Governor Waihee for induction into the Aloha Order of Merit for the reasons given in earlier testimony.