

MAR 16 2026

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

NOMINATING JOHN D. WAIHE'E III FOR INDUCTION INTO THE ALOHA ORDER
OF MERIT.

1 WHEREAS, John D. Waihe'e III made history as the first
2 Native Hawaiian to be elected as Governor of any state in the
3 United States, serving as the fourth Governor of the State from
4 1986 to 1994; and
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6 WHEREAS, John D. Waihe'e III's election as Governor was
7 nationally and internationally significant, representing a
8 milestone for Native Hawaiian leadership and inspiring
9 indigenous peoples across the United States and beyond; and
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11 WHEREAS, John D. Waihe'e III distinguished himself
12 nationally and internationally by working closely with
13 presidents, governors, and foreign leaders, and elevating the
14 State's role as a bridge between the United States and the Asia-
15 Pacific region; and
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17 WHEREAS, John D. Waihe'e III was chosen by his fellow
18 governors to serve as the Chair of the Democratic Governors
19 Association in 1992, placing a governor from the State in a
20 prominent national leadership role and reflecting the respect
21 and confidence of his peers during a pivotal election year; and
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23 WHEREAS, John D. Waihe'e III also served as Chair of the
24 Education Commission of the States, through which he helped
25 shape national education policy and strengthen public education
26 systems across the country while advocating for strong federal-
27 state collaboration to support the State's schools; and
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29 WHEREAS, during the period of military downsizing and
30 economic transition in the early 1990s, John D. Waihe'e III
31 worked with federal leaders to support economic diversification,
32 workforce development, and long-term stability for the State's
33 economy; and



1
2 WHEREAS, John D. Waihe'e III implemented and advanced the
3 State's QUEST health care program, an innovative Medicaid
4 managed care model designed to expand access to health coverage
5 for low-income and working families, which received national
6 recognition as a pioneering example of effective federal-state
7 partnership in health care reform; and
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9 WHEREAS, as the first Native Hawaiian governor of any
10 state, John D. Waihe'e III brought the voice and concerns of
11 indigenous peoples into federal policy discussions, elevating
12 the State's national stature and bringing distinction and honor
13 to the State; and
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15 WHEREAS, John D. Waihe'e III served as a delegate and
16 emerging leader at the State's Constitutional Convention of
17 1978, where he and fellow delegates championed reforms that
18 reshaped the State's government and society, including
19 establishing the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, formally
20 recognizing the Hawaiian language as an official language of the
21 State, strengthening protections for natural and cultural
22 resources, and increasing government ethics and accountability,
23 demonstrating his commitment to the betterment of all the people
24 of the State; and
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26 WHEREAS, John D. Waihe'e III further advanced the national
27 dialogue on reconciliation and Native Hawaiian rights through
28 the Hawaiian Sovereignty Advisory Commission, efforts that
29 helped lay the groundwork for the 1993 Apology Resolution,
30 Public Law 103-150; and
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32 WHEREAS, John D. Waihe'e III devoted his administration to
33 the betterment of the people of the State, promoting educational
34 opportunity, economic development, social equity, and
35 environmental stewardship; and
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37 WHEREAS, John D. Waihe'e III continues to contribute to the
38 well-being of the State through public commentary, civic
39 engagement, and leadership in critical policy discussions,
40 including his advocacy for resilience and accountability in the
41 State's energy sector, as expressed in opinion articles



1 published in Honolulu Civil Beat in 2024 and 2025, and through
2 his ongoing promotion of the State's role as a vital bridge
3 between Pacific nations and the United States while serving as
4 Chair of the Board of Governors of the East-West Center; and
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6 WHEREAS, through his current efforts in media, opinion
7 editorials, and civic forums, John D. Waihe'e III exemplifies
8 lifelong service to the State, demonstrating that his leadership
9 did not conclude with public office but continues to uplift and
10 guide the lahui; and
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12 WHEREAS, the Legislature established the Aloha Order of
13 Merit in 1993 to honor certain individuals, and section 5-7.6,
14 Hawaii Revised Statutes, provides in relevant part that
15 "[h]onorees shall have:
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- 17 (1) Achieved national or international recognition in
18 their field either by a single event or by the
19 totality of their work that has been either pioneering
20 in their field or that has been outstanding in the
21 long-term; and
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- 23 (2) (A) Contributed to the attainment of statehood for
24 Hawaii;
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- 26 (B) Devoted themselves to the betterment of the
27 State, embodying the concept of the Aloha Spirit;
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- 29 (C) Provided extraordinary service to the State; or
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- 31 (D) Brought honor to the State"; and
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33 WHEREAS, John D. Waihe'e III has achieved national and
34 international recognition as a statesman and advocate for the
35 State and its people through the totality of his work that has
36 been outstanding in the long-term; and
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38 WHEREAS, John D. Waihe'e III has devoted himself to the
39 betterment of the State while embodying the concept of the Aloha
40 Spirit, provided extraordinary service to the State, and brought
41 honor to the State; and
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1 WHEREAS, John D. Waihe'e III meets all requirements
2 necessary to be inducted as a member of the Aloha Order of
3 Merit; now, therefore,
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5 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third
6 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026, the
7 House of Representatives concurring, that this body nominates
8 John D. Waihe'e III for induction into the Aloha Order of Merit;
9 and
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11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
12 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the members of the Aloha
13 Order of Merit Committee, Governor, President of the Senate,
14 Speaker of the House of Representatives, and former Governor
15 John D. Waihe'e III.
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OFFERED BY: 

