

MAR 10 2026

SENATE RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING OPEN WATER LIFEGUARDS AS FIRST RESPONDERS IN
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THEIR ESSENTIAL ROLE IN EMERGENCY
RESPONSE, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING THROUGHOUT
THE STATE.

1 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards perform an essential public
2 safety function by protecting the lives of countless residents
3 and visitors from death or serious injury throughout the State;
4 and

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6 WHEREAS, in Kauai and Maui counties, lifeguards are
7 professionally designated as ocean safety officers, while
8 lifeguards in the City and County of Honolulu and Hawaii County
9 are designated as water safety officers, reflecting their
10 specialized training, responsibilities, and scope of duty; and

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12 WHEREAS, in the performance of their duties, open water
13 lifeguards routinely place themselves at significant risk to
14 their own lives and physical safety in dynamic and hazardous
15 ocean and shoreline environments; and

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17 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards are frequently among the
18 first personnel to arrive at emergency scenes and operate
19 alongside police officers and firefighters to protect life,
20 secure scenes, and preserve public safety until additional
21 responders arrive; and

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23 WHEREAS, the duties of open water lifeguards extend beyond
24 ocean rescues and include responding to emergencies on land,
25 such as cardiac arrest, traumatic injuries, and motor vehicle
26 collisions occurring on or near beaches, parks, and public
27 roadways; and

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29 WHEREAS, many open water lifeguards are cross-trained in
30 emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement
31 support, and water rescue craft operations; and

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33 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards undergo rigorous and
34 continuous training, including but not limited to high-



1 performance cardiopulmonary resuscitation, automated external
2 defibrillator use, advanced rescue techniques, and emergency
3 scene management; and

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5 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards respond to emergencies by
6 attending to, treating, assisting, and transporting victims,
7 which collectively constitute the four defined duties of an
8 emergency response employee; and

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10 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards not only protect human life,
11 but also safeguard property, preserve evidence, and protect the
12 environment, which together represent the four core tenets
13 commonly used to define a first responder; and

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15 WHEREAS, the term "first responder" is commonly defined as
16 an individual with specialized training who is among the first
17 to arrive and provide assistance at the scene of an emergency;
18 and

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20 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards differ fundamentally from
21 pool lifeguards due to the unpredictable and hazardous
22 environment in which they operate and the wide range of
23 emergency situations and locations to which they respond; and

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25 WHEREAS, many other countries formally recognize lifeguards
26 as emergency responders and grant them access to programs,
27 protections, and resources afforded to first responders; now,
28 therefore,

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30 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third
31 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2026,
32 that this body recognizes open water lifeguards, including ocean
33 safety officers and water safety officers, as first responders
34 in acknowledgement of their essential role in emergency
35 response, public safety, and community wellbeing throughout the
36 State; and

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38 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all relevant state and county
39 agencies, departments, and governing bodies are urged to adopt
40 this recognition and ensure that open water lifeguards are
41 afforded the rights, resources, training support, and
42 professional respect accorded to first responders; and

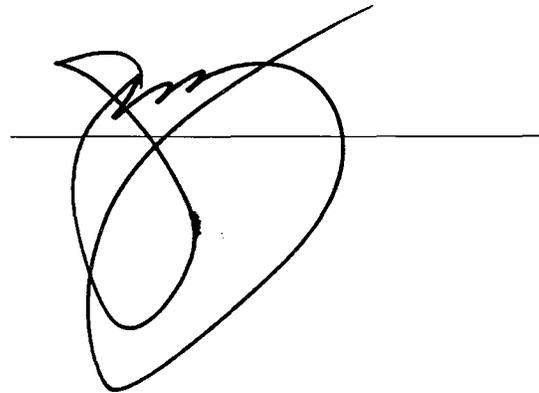


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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that public safety agencies are encouraged to continue collaboration amongst themselves to strengthen emergency response capabilities and enhance safety across the State's ocean, shoreline, and public environments; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, and mayor of each county.

OFFERED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and appears to be a name, possibly "J. Smith".