

STAND. COM. REP. NO. **4005**

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAY 6 2026

RE: GOV. MSG. NOS. 788,
789

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2026
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts, to which was referred Governor's Message Nos. 788 and 789, submitting for study and consideration the nominations of:

HAWAI'I SISTER-STATE AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS COMMISSION

G.M. No. 788 KAREN KNUDSEN
for a term to expire 06-30-2030; and

G.M. No. 789 WESLEY FONG
for a term to expire 06-30-2030,

begs leave to report as follows:

Your Committee reviewed the personal histories, resumes, and statements submitted by Karen Knudsen and Wesley Fong for service on the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission.

KAREN KNUDSEN

Your Committee received testimony in support of the nomination for the appointment of Karen Knudsen from the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism; Business Development and Support Division of the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism; East-West Center; and twenty-three individuals.

Upon review of the testimony, your Committee finds that Ms. Knudsen's background and dedication to serving the public

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qualify her to be appointed to the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission as a representative of the East-West Center. Your Committee notes that Ms. Knudsen began her career in international relations by serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Micronesia and progressed through multiple organizations focused on the Indo-Pacific region before arriving at the East-West Center. In her thirty years at the East-West Center, Ms. Knudsen oversaw the Arts Program and Office of Alumni Affairs, directed the Office of External Affairs, served as the Vice President of the East-West Center Foundation, and was the Center's military liaison and specialist on Burma/Myanmar. Your Committee further notes that Ms. Knudsen's involvement with professional associations spans from being a founding member of the Suu Foundation, a nonprofit established to provide educational training support in Burma, to being Chair of the Board of Directors of the Japan-America Society of Hawaii. Your Committee finds that Ms. Knudsen has a thorough understanding of the role and responsibilities of board members, and her public affairs and international relations acumen will continue to enhance the effectiveness of the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission. Your Committee therefore recommends that Karen Knudsen be appointed to the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission based on her knowledge, background, and dedication to public service.

WESLEY FONG

Your Committee received testimony in support of the nomination for the appointment of Wesley Fong from the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism; Business Development and Support Division of the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism; and one individual.

Upon review of the testimony, your Committee finds that Mr. Fong's background and dedication to serving the public qualify him to be appointed as a member to the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission. Your Committee notes that Mr. Fong's diverse background of public service started with military service in the United States Army, during which he saw combat in Vietnam as a medical officer and later retiring as a staff judge advocate. Mr. Fong furthered his career in litigation by serving as a state Supervising Deputy Attorney General and Senior Deputy Corporation Counsel for the City and County of Honolulu, and by currently working as an adjunct professor



teaching law and ethics at the University of Hawaii, Shidler Business School, Travel Industry Management, in addition to chairing the State Ethics Commission. Mr. Fong also served as President of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and President of the West Honolulu Rotary Club, with both positions allowing him to interact internationally on joint projects, and Vice Chair of the Hawaii/Pacific Export Council. Your Committee finds that Mr. Fong has a thorough understanding of the role and responsibilities of board members, and his wide-ranging background in law and international community service will continue to enhance the effectiveness of the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission. Your Committee therefore recommends that Wesley Fong be appointed to the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission based on his knowledge, background, and dedication to public service.

As affirmed by the records of votes of the members of your Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts that are attached to this report, your Committee, after full consideration of the background, experience, and qualifications of the nominees, has found the nominees to be qualified for the positions to which nominated and recommends that the Senate advise and consent to the nominations.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Water, Land,
Culture and the Arts,



CHRIS LEE, Chair



