



STATE OF HAWAII
CAMPAIGN SPENDING COMMISSION

235 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET, ROOM 300
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

February 4, 2026

TO: The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

The Honorable Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Kristin Izumi-Nitao, Executive Director
Campaign Spending Commission **KI**

SUBJECT: **Testimony on S.B. No. 2529, Relating to Campaign Contributions.**
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Friday, February 6, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 016 & Videoconference

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill¹. The Campaign Spending Commission ("Commission") supports this bill.

This is a housekeeping measure. In 2023, the Legislature amended Hawaii Revised Statutes ("HRS") §11-351(b) to prohibit the acceptance of a cash contribution more than \$100, in the aggregate, during an election period. This bill amends HRS §11-364(a) requiring the return of an excess cash contribution to the contributor within thirty (30) days of receipt of the excess contribution. Any excess cash contribution not returned to the contributor within thirty (30) days shall be deposited into the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund. Thus, the treatment of an excess cash contribution will be consistent with other types of excess contributions.

The Commission requests that this Committee pass this bill.

¹ The companion bill is H.B. No. 2051.



COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Chair Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair Mike Gabbard

Friday, February 6, 9:00 AM HST

Conference Room 016 & Videoconference State Capitol

SB2529 – Pertaining to Return of Excessive Campaign Contributions

TESTIMONY

Gabriela Schneider, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii supports SB2529, which would create accountability mechanisms for contribution limit violations, but has concerns about the provision allowing candidates to choose which excess contributions to return.

The League supports SB2529 because it increases accountability for candidates' timeliness in reacting to excessive aggregate contributions. Transparency of this process can only be beneficial for later enforcement.

However, the language stating that candidates "may choose which contributions to return" creates a problematic loophole that undermines equitable enforcement. This discretion allows candidates to:

- Retain contributions from their most politically valuable or connected donors
- Return contributions from less important supporters
- Effectively circumvent the spirit of aggregate contribution limits

If a candidate receives ten \$1,000 contributions but can only keep \$6,000 total, they could keep money from wealthy donors or special interests while returning contributions from ordinary citizens. This runs counter to the League of Women Voters' goal of ensuring "political equality for all citizens" and preventing corruption through money in politics. Therefore, the League requests an amendment to require objective criteria for returning excess contributions, such as:

- Last-in, first-out (most recent contributions returned first)
- Pro-rata returns (proportional reduction from all contributors)
- Any other objective standard that eliminates discretionary choice

This approach strengthens enforcement while preventing selective favoritism in contribution management.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HAWAII

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