



Aloha e Friends,

I hope you and your 'ohanas are safe and well, and that you had a wonderful Valentine's Day & long weekend! As always, you can contact me at (808) 586-6830 or sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov if I can help you or your family in any way. I also invite you to follow me on social media: [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [Twitter](#). Best wishes to you and your 'ohana.

**COMMITTEE
CHAIR**

**AGRICULTURE &
ENVIRONMENT**

MEMBER

- ◆ Judiciary
- ◆ Government Operations

DISTRICT 21

Kapolei,

Makakilo,

Kalaeloa,

and portions of:

Fernandez Village,

Ewa

DISTRICT 21 COMMUNITY UPDATES

Listen Story Community Meeting

On Saturday, Feb 25, 9-10am I'll be hosting my Listen Story Community Meeting. The meeting is a hybrid, so people can attend either in-person at the [Kapolei High School Teachers' Lounge](#), or via Zoom. Our **Special Guest Councilmember Andria Tupola** will be providing a district update and talking about some of her community priorities. There will be time for Q & A. Following Councilmember Tupola's presentation, I'll give some brief community updates. Please send me an email at sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov to RSVP or for the link to join via Zoom.

GreenDrop Grand Opening at Kamakana Ali'i Shopping Center

A warm Aloha Congrats to [GreenDrop](#) on their [Grand Opening](#) on Feb 16, at Kamakana Ali'i Shopping Center, joined by our Mayor Blangiardi! The GreenDrop trailer is located by Wendy's in Kamakana Ali'i, off of Kapolei Parkway. A very convenient location to swing by and drop off your gently-used clothing, shoes, household items, and more; your donations will help support GreenDrop's nonprofit partner, the United Cerebral Palsy Association of Hawai'i.

My Community Liaison Jhanavi Pomerantz presented an Honorary Certificate on my behalf from the Hawai'i State Senate to the GreenDrop team. Seth Haviland, Senior Operations Manager, flew all the way over from Texas for the celebration! Brandon Souza also presented an Honorary Certificate from the Hawai'i House of Representatives on behalf of Rep. Diamond Garcia.



Jhanavi Pomerantz, Senator Gabbard's office, Seth Haviland, GreenDrop's Senior Operations Manager, Mayor Rick Blangiardi, and Brandon Souza, Representative Diamond Garcia's office, at the Feb 16 Grand Opening of GreenDrop's trailer at Kamakana Ali'i Shopping Center, Kapolei.

DISTRICT 21 COMMUNITY UPDATES



My 2023 Session Staff at Your Service

For the 2023 legislative session, my Office Manager is Meg Turner, who oversees the overall operations of my office and assists with my Agriculture and Environment Committee (AEN), which I chair. Meg has been with me for 9 years. My Community Liaison is Jhanavi Pomerantz, who started in August 2022. Meg and Jhanavi are my full-time year-round staffers. I have two session hires who are with me for the duration of the session. Reggie Kawena Garcia, who worked at the Legislature last year in the Ways and Means Committee (WAM), is my AEN Committee Clerk. Angel Crumpton, who worked a session in my office in 2016, returns as my Legislative Assistant.

2023 Session Staff: (pictured L-R) Jhanavi Pomerantz, Community Liaison, Reggie Kawena Garcia, session Committee Clerk, Meg Turner, Office Manager, and Angel Crumpton, session Legislative Assistant.



The annual Invasive Species Info Briefing was held on Jan 26; with legislators pictured (L-R); Sen. DeCoite, Rep. Woodson, Rep. Souza, Sen. Richards, Rep. Kahaloa, Rep. Cochran, Rep. Lowen, Sen. Gabbard, Rep. Ichiyama, Rep. Poeoe, Sen. Rhoads, and Sen. Awa.

Invasive Species Info Briefing

On January 26th, I held our annual [Invasive Species Info Briefing!](#) My AEN committee was joined by the House committees on Energy and Environment Protection (EEP), Agriculture and Food Systems (AGR), and Water and Land (WAL). It was very informative, with topics including the Hawai'i Interagency Biosecurity Plan, briefings by the Plant and Animal Industries of the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture, the Department of Land and Natural Resources Animal Industry and Division of Forestry and Wildlife, and UH Manoa's College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources. In addition to the briefings, there was lively discussion on invasive species like the Little Fire Ant and Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle. You can watch the Info Briefing here on YouTube: [01-26-2023 Invasive Species Info Briefing.](#)

A big Mahalo to Chelsea Arnott, Coordinator for Invasive Species Hawaii, and her team for all their help in organizing this great info briefing!

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

2023 Ag Day at the Capitol

Feb. 9 was the 13th Annual [Ag Day](#) (first one since 2019!), hosted by the [Hawaii Farm Bureau \(HFBF\)](#) and hosted by Rep. Cedric Gates, Rep. Kirstin Kahaloa, Sen. Tim Richards and myself. The 4th floor of the Capitol was packed with educational displays, food and fruit samples, and more... 😊



Helmuth Rogg, Department of Agriculture, and Sen. Gabbard, on Feb. 9 at Ag Day at the Capitol 2023.

Legislative Update

A month into my 17th year representing the people of West O'ahu, the 2023 Legislative Session has started off with a real bang!

I personally introduced 88 bills, and almost 200 bills were referred to my AEN committee (Agriculture and Environment). 232 more bills were submitted in the Senate this year compared to last year, so it was a race to get them all scheduled and heard before our First Lateral Deadline on Feb. 17. This means all bills that are referred to two committees jointly (for example, AEN/EET) had to be heard and passed out to their final committee before the 16th. I can assure you this was no mean feat! Since we launched our 2023 session, my Committee has heard 90 bills. On Feb 6, I heard 16 bills and received 95 testimonies in 90 minutes!



Sen. Gabbard in his office on Feb 6. after a very productive hearing!

Agriculture and Environment Committee (AEN) 2023

This session marks my 7th year as Chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment, and 15th year as Chair of the Senate Environment Committee. The AEN Committee holds hearings every M-W-F from 1pm to 2:30pm. In the past, we've had flexibility in terms of hearing end times, but since moving to a hybrid platform, we need to keep to the schedule. We set a one- to two-minute digital timer on oral testimony. I used to let people testify at my committee hearings without a time limit, but because of the strict schedule we've had to stick to the one- to two-minute rule. I highly recommend you summarize your testimony, so you can communicate your main points within the time limit.

Get Involved in the Process

This year 1,618 bills were introduced in the Senate and 1,514 bills in the House for a total of 3,132 bills; these numbers are way up compared to last session's 1,386 bills introduced in the Senate and 1,119 bills in the House for a total of 2,505. Every year, around 2,500 to 3,000 bills are introduced, and only 200-300 of them become law. Each committee has their own web page which lists all the bills the Committee plans to hear. It's critical to contact the Chairs and ask them to schedule any bills that are important to you. I encourage you to submit either written or oral testimony on the bills that matter to you. Sign-up via the Legislature's website (capitol.hawaii.gov) at least 24 hours in advance.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

2023 Priority Legislation

Some of my priority bills this session:

Ag Loan Program ([SB640](#))

This bill would establish the Hawai'i Agricultural Investment Program to support local agricultural producers. A permanent and dedicated Agricultural Emergency Loan Program is needed because loans to agricultural enterprises needing emergency funding due to natural and economic disasters are currently funded from the agricultural loan revolving fund and the dual-purpose places untenable and unsustainable strain on resources for farmers at times of need.

Carbon Cash Back ([SB1060](#))

This bill would establish a carbon cash back program which puts a tax on fossil fuels and returns an equal amount generated by the carbon tax to Hawaiian residents and a refundable tax credit or cash payment. More than 40 countries already have adopted a carbon tax program.

Cesspool Conversion ([SB426](#))

This bill would implement the recommendation of the cesspool conversion working group to accelerate the dates for required upgrades, conversions, or connections of priority level 1 cesspools and priority level 2 cesspools by requiring priority level 1 cesspools to be upgraded, converted, or connected before 1/1/2030, and priority level 2 cesspools to be upgraded, converted, or connected before 1/1/2035, rather than before 1/1/2050.

Constitutional Green Amendment ([SB635](#))

This is the third year that I've introduced a Green Amendment. This bill would put a question on the ballot asking people if they want to vote to increase the rights of all people regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or income, including future generations, to pure water, clean air, stable climate, and healthy environments. This would elevate these rights much the same as the Bill of Rights in our US Constitution does for the right to free speech, religion, and the right to bear arms.

Extended Producer Responsibility ([SB1458](#))

This bill would establish an EPR Program which would require

certain producers of fast-moving consumer goods to register with the DOH and pay an annual fee based on the amount of packaging volume the covered producer places on the market each calendar year. The goal is to ultimately reduce the volume of packaging waste sent to landfills or power plants that burn municipal solid waste as a fuel.

Farm to School ([SB663](#))

This bill would appropriate funds for the establishment of an agriculture education coordinator position within the University of Hawai'i at Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources.

Healthy Soils Bill ([SB660](#))

This bill would promote organic and regenerative farming practices, helping farmers to play a huge role in climate change mitigation.

PFAS ([SB504](#))

This bill would, beginning 12/31/2026, prohibit the manufacture, sale, offer for sale, distribution for sale, and distribution for use of any food packaging, food service ware, cosmetic, or personal care product that contains perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances.

Sustainable Food Systems [SB420](#)

This bill would establish the sustainable food systems working group within the Department of Agriculture. It would require the working group to submit a plan, recommendations for implementing the plan, and any proposed legislation to the legislature. It appropriates funds to establish the working group and develop the plan and for an unspecified number of sustainability specialist positions to be employed by the DOA.

Visitor Impact Fee or Visitor Green Fee ([SB636](#))

This is one of the bills in the Environmental Legislative Caucus Package which I co-chair along with Rep Nicole Lowen. This bill would mandate that visitors who come to our island pay a fee to help maintain and protect our natural resources including our reefs, beaches, oceans, forests, streams, shorelines etc.