

2019 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

State Representative Nicole Lowen

Kailua-Kona • Holualoa • Kalaea • Honokohau



Aloha Neighbors,

With the conclusion of the 2019 session of the legislature, I wanted to update you on key actions taken by the legislature this year, including bills passed and budget highlights.

It is a privilege to serve as your representative and together we have accomplished much in recent years.

I look forward to continuing to work for our community, and I count on your input and ideas to help me do this. Please don't hesitate to contact me any time with your questions, ideas, or comments.

Mahalo nui loa,

Nicole

Rep. Nicole Lowen

Clean Energy, Environment and Climate

This year, Rep. Lowen was assigned to Chair the House Committee on Energy and Environment, and had a very productive year working on legislation to support Hawaii's leadership in clean energy, climate policy, and environmental protection. Below are some highlights of bills passed by her committee.

House Bill 556 established the State's first appliance efficiency standards. This measure will save the average household \$215/per year in utility bill costs and will reduce energy use, water use, and emissions at the same time.

The EEP committee also took significant steps towards implementing a clean transportation policy for the State by establishing a rebate program for the installation or upgrade of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations with House Bill 1585. House Bill 401 was passed to enable State and County agencies to pursue performance contracts for EV fleets and charging infrastructure. Both of these measures will incentivize the build-out of electric vehicle infrastructure, a step which makes EVs more convenient, affordable and accessible for families at all income levels.

House Bill 852 appropriates \$150,000 for a study of carbon pricing to help the legislature determine if implementing a carbon price in Hawaii will help us to reach our emissions reduction goals. This bill also better defines the role of the Hawaii State Energy Office to align its work with current energy and climate policy of the State.

Other measures passed included Senate Bill 522 to create a working group examine ways to reduce single-use plastics in the state, and House Bill 1548, which appropriates \$750,000 to combat Rapid Ohia Death.

Kua Bay Lifeguards Funding Secured

After this legislative session, Kua Bay will be a safer place for everyone. This year's budget includes funding to hire lifeguards for Kua Bay, and for a lifeguard tower and other necessary equipment. When the road to this beach was improved, it encouraged more visitors to come every year. Since 2013 there have been over 30 emergency calls from Kua Bay, with two-thirds of those calls resulting in hospitalization. Several fatal drownings have also occurred. Rep. Lowen has been advocating for the State to fund these lifeguard positions for several years, and the passage of this measure will save lives.



District 6 CIP Projects

Kealakehe Elementary School

- \$14.99 million for a new classroom building, including access road and parking improvements

Kealakehe Intermediate School

- \$630,000 for re-roofing

Kealakehe High School

- \$3 million for all-weather track

Kailua-Kona Pier:

- \$150,000 for loading dock repairs

Ellison Onizuka Kona International Airport at Keahole:

- \$15.7 million for terminal improvements

Kona Community Hospital:

- \$9 millions for repairs, renovations, and improvements

Kealakehe Wastewater Treatment Plant:

- \$750,000 for R-1 irrigation reuse line to serve ag lots in lower Kalaea (requires 10% county matching funds of \$150K)

Honalo Marshalling Yard:

- \$1.1 million for improvements to agricultural produce processing facility

La'i 'Opua (DHHL)

- \$2 million for N. Kona exploratory well
- \$14.3 million for Village 4 development
- \$500,000 for infrastructure changes

Grants-in-Aid

Innovations Public Charter School:

- \$200,000 towards construction of a community center

Bridge House:

- \$60,000 for transportation services for sober living program

Going Home Hawaii:

- \$125,000 for drug treatment pilot program for pregnant women

Japanese Cultural Center of Kona

- \$75,000 to plan for the development of a Japanese cultural center in Kona

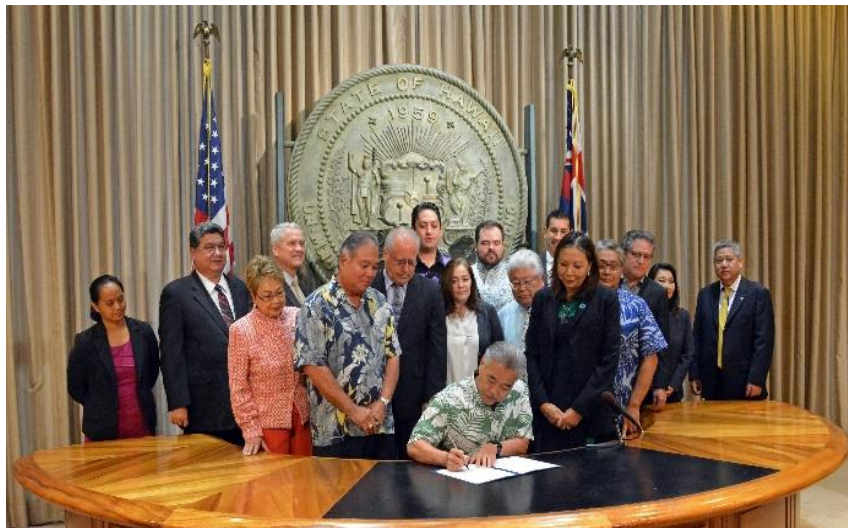
West Hawaii Community Health Center:

- \$220,000 to expand services in S. Kona

Disaster Relief for Hawaii County

The eruption of Kilauea Volcano in lower Puna last year took a toll on Hawaii County, and this legislative session began with the understanding that all Big Island legislators would work together to support a disaster relief package. \$60 million was approved in House Bill 1180 to help Hawaii Island's recovery. The process was expedited to send the bill up to the Governor for his signature at the end March so that these funds could be available to the county months ahead of the end of the legislative session. The state also allocated \$22 million last year in emergency funds, bringing the relief package total to \$82 million. These funds will help the county to leverage additional federal dollars for disaster recovery efforts.

The Hawaii Tourism Authority approved \$2.5 million out of their budget to help Hawaii Island's tourism market recover from the disaster. The HTA campaign will target the island's two largest markets, the U.S. mainland and Japan, and will work to restore the reputation of Hawaii Island as a safe travel destination.



Legislators secure relief funding for Hawaii County

Kupuna Services

With a growing population of seniors in the state of Hawaii, making sure that we are caring for Kupuna was a priority at the legislature this year. A package of bills was passed to provide over \$20 million for elder services throughout the state. These measures will help kupuna to age in place and support family members who are juggling full-time employment with the demands of caring for aging relatives. The funding provided will help keep our kupuna healthy, active, independent and engaged in the community, and will save on health care costs in the long term.

Specific programs funded include the Kupuna Care Program, Kupuna Caregivers, the Hawaii Healthy Aging Partnership, and Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Services.

Other Highlights This Session

Teen Suicide Prevention

Teen suicide and mental health issues have been on the rise in Hawaii, and the highest rates are on the neighbor islands. **House Bill 330** appropriates \$150,000 to support youth suicide early intervention and prevention initiatives statewide. **Senate Bill 383** requires the Department of Education to develop a youth suicide and awareness prevention training program for public school personnel. **House Bill 655** designates September as "Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month," and promotes public awareness regarding suicide prevention by providing education, resources, and support to individuals, families, and communities.

Homelessness and Housing

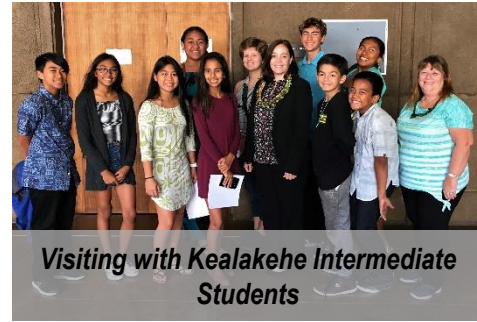
All counties in the state are continuing to struggle with the difficult issue of homelessness. **House Bill 257** extends the time for counties to be able to use the \$30 million in Ohana Zones funding that was appropriated last year, and adds an additional \$2 million for temporary housing construction under the Ohana Zones pilot program. **Senate Bill 471** provides \$15 million for core homeless services including Rapid Rehousing, Housing First, and the Rental Supplement Program. **Senate Bill 1124** requires a psychiatrist or nurse to examine a person prior to discharge from a psychiatric facility to determine if an assisted community treatment plan is needed for the treatment of mental illness. **House Bill 1312** provides \$50 million for the Rental Housing Revolving Fund and \$30 million from conveyances tax for construction of affordable housing rentals.

Early Childhood Education

High-quality early education has proven to be crucial to childrens' development and academic achievement. **Senate Bill 78** appropriates funds for 10 new public pre-K programs and to continue the operation of 18 pre-K classrooms in charter schools which will lose federal funding. This bill also establishes the Executive Office on Early Learning as the administrative authority for pre-K programs.

Zero-Based Budgeting

It costs about \$15.3 billion yearly to run Hawaii State government. This year, the House Finance Committee took a new approach to the budget process by implementing what is known as zero-based budgeting. All State departments and agencies were required to justify their roles and spending. This process increased accountability and transparency and allowed a closer examination of the State's budget. Going forward, the legislature will continue to dive deeper into how state funds are used by each agency and to work to ensure responsible use of taxpayer dollars.



Visiting with Kealahou Intermediate Students



Surveying the spread of Rapid Ohia Death on Hawaii Island



Women's Legislative Caucus



Chairing a Committee Hearing



Honoring Kealahou Intermediate's Hawaii State Teacher of the Year



REPRESENTATIVE
 NICOLE LOWEN
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Join me for a Talk Story!
WHEN: July 3rd, 5:30-7:30 pm
WHERE: West Hawaii Civic Center

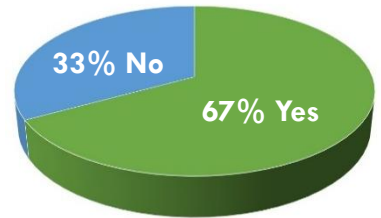
I will be there with other West Hawaii legislators and councilpersons to update the community on the results of the legislative session and the status of other projects in the district. I hope to see you there!

Mahalo to everyone who participated in our community survey. We are pleased to share the results with you!

Hawaii is one of only six states nationwide that has not sanctioned lotteries.

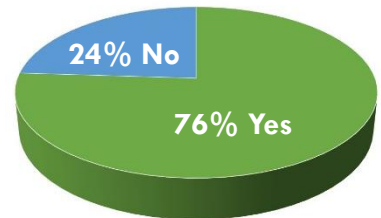
Do you support allowing a lottery to fund education?

There was no bill passed this year to create a lottery. A majority of respondents support this, but those opposing did raise some valid points. Since the bulk of lottery revenue comes from lower-income people, it can be a regressive “tax on the poor.” Others were concerned that it would be hard to guarantee that revenues would be spent on education, and not used to replace the existing budget. Those in support see it as an untapped source of revenue that can bolster public education.



Adults in Hawaii must make an hourly wage of \$14-\$18/hour to survive the high cost of living. Do you support raising the minimum wage to \$15/hour?

There were several bills this year to increase Hawaii’s minimum wage, including one that would have increased wages incrementally, reaching \$15/hr in 2023, and providing a slightly lower step-up for businesses that provide employer-paid healthcare. Unfortunately, no minimum wage bill passed this year, but it will be taken up again next session. With Hawaii’s high cost of living, it’s important to ensure that workers are paid a living wage.



Do you support the creation of a state-level incentives for the purchase of electric vehicles to facilitate a transition to clean transportation?

Two-thirds of the oil imported into Hawaii is used for transportation fuel, and transportation accounts for most of our greenhouse gas emissions. A transition to clean transportation is needed for Hawaii to meet its carbon reduction and renewable energy goals. No bills were passed this year for vehicle purchase incentives, but we did pass legislation to encourage build-out of EV infrastructure to help make electric vehicles more affordable and convenient for low-and middle-income customers.

