

REPRESENTATIVE NICOLE LOWEN

Community Update

Kailua-Kona • Holualoa • Honokohau • Kalaoa



Aloha Neighbors!

I hope this message finds you safe and healthy. As we approach two years of living with a worldwide pandemic, and the challenges it has brought, I appreciate your patience as we all work together to navigate a path forward.

The 2022 session starts in January, and I want to hear from you about your concerns and priorities for our community. Please see inside for more details on how to participate in my annual survey and share your feedback with me. Your input is much appreciated.

As always, please don't hesitate to contact me at any time. It is a privilege to serve you.

Mahalo nui loa,

Nicole

Rep. Nicole Lowen

 @representativelowen

 @nicole_lowen

 @nlowen

New Palamanui Forest Reserve Established

At first glance, the land adjacent to the Palamanui Campus looks like it has been completely overtaken by non-native shrubs and grasses. However, amid the fountain grass and haole koa, a wealth of native plants are surviving there — wiliwili, lama, alahe'e trees, and other remnants of native lowland dry forest, a critically endangered ecosystem in Hawaii. Following the discovery of these native resources, The Department of Land and Natural Resources and the University of Hawaii have been working together over the past several years to develop a plan to protect and restore this unique area, and to integrate these efforts into curriculum about natural resource management, conservation, natural history, biology, and threats to Hawaii's ecosystems. In the 2021 session, Rep. Lowen was able to secure \$60,000 in the State Budget as a starting point to support these efforts. In July, an agreement was signed for 706 acres of state land adjacent to the Palamanui campus, where the DLNR and UH will partner in managing the new forest reserve area. Rep. Lowen participated in a site visit of the forest reserve in October to learn more about the conservation work that is now underway.



Rep. Lowen planting an 'ohe mauka sapling at Palamanui

Supporting Kona Farmers & Coffee Growers

In October, a group of Hawaii Island legislators and the Chair and Vice Chair of the House Committee on Agriculture toured Kona farms to learn more about issues facing farmers. For coffee farmers, the coffee berry borer continues to be an issue, and now coffee leaf rust is also threatening Kona's coffee industry. To support farmers in combatting these pests, the 2021 legislature passed Act 138 to continue the coffee berry



Presenting a certificate for the Kona Coffee Festival's 50th Anniversary

borer subsidy program (which was created by a bill that Rep. Lowen authored in 2014), and to expand it to cover subsidies for coffee leaf rust treatment. Advocating for Kona's farmers and for greater food security for the State continues to be a priority as the 2022 legislative session approaches.

We also want to wish the Kona Coffee Cultural Festival a big "Happy Anniversary"

for reaching 50 years! The 50th anniversary celebration was supposed to be last year, but, due to the pandemic, it was moved to this year. Rep. Lowen and Senator Kanuha presented a certificate on behalf of the Hawaii State Legislature to recognize this milestone. The Kona Coffee Cultural Festival celebrates the rich history of Kona coffee and the venerable accomplishments of Kona coffee pioneers, multigenerational farmers, and talented local artisans.

Voggy Day Tips

With Kilauea actively erupting again, the vog is back in Kona. Although our days are a little hazier than they were last year, the volume of vog has settled to a manageable level for now. The skies are still blue and air quality is still at levels considered “good” by the EPA on most days. On days when vog levels are high, or if you are particularly sensitive to the vog, consider the following measures to help you reduce exposure and stay safe.

- Stay hydrated. Drink plenty of fluids to support your body’s efforts to cope with the vog.
- Improve indoor air quality with an air purifier with a HEPA filter. House plants can also help to improve indoor air quality.
- Drive with windows up and air conditioning set to re-circulate.
- On days when vog levels are high or if you’re particularly sensitive to the vog, reduce outdoor activities that cause heavy breathing. Children, kupuna, and individuals with existing respiratory conditions may be more sensitive to vog.

Remember that face coverings and masks used to prevent the spread of COVID-19 do not provide protection from vog or sulfur dioxide.

Additional Resources

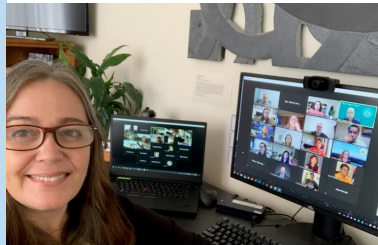
Hawaii Interagency Vog Dashboard:
<https://vog.ivhnn.org>

Purple Air: <https://www.purpleair.com/map>

AirNow: <https://airnow.gov>

Staying in Touch During a Pandemic

Over the last year and a half, it seemed like there was a constant stream of new information coming out, and it was challenging to keep track of all the changes. Rep. Lowen's office has been working hard throughout the pandemic to keep constituents informed with up-to-date information via her email newsletters, virtual talk stories, and social media accounts. From helping people with unemployment questions, to sharing information about pandemic relief programs, to helping people navigate all the ever-changing travel rules, to spreading the word about testing and vaccine sites—there has been no shortage of work for our office!



Rep. Lowen on zoom meetings

In addition to the several virtual talk stories hosted early on in the pandemic to share COVID information, Rep. Lowen has also organized virtual sessions to discuss school reopening plans, to update the community about the outcomes of the 2021 legislative session, and to discuss the end of the eviction moratorium and the new landlord-tenant mediation process that is now in place. We miss seeing everyone’s faces and look forward to a time when we can add in-person events back into our schedule.

All the talk stories can be watched back on Facebook at www.facebook.com/representativelowen. **To be informed of future talk stories and other community events, sign up for Rep. Lowen’s e-newsletters at mailchi.mp/capitol/replowen.** You can also find updates from Rep. Lowen on Instagram at [@nicole_lowen](https://www.instagram.com/nicole_lowen) and on twitter at [@nlowen](https://twitter.com/nlowen).

We Want to Hear From you!

As the 2022 legislative session approaches, we welcome your input on important issues that face West Hawaii and our state. This year, **our annual community survey will be entirely online at bit.ly/communitysurvey2022.** Rep. Lowen’s priorities for district 6 continue to be affordable housing, supporting students and teachers, expanding health care access, addressing the high cost of living, protecting natural resources, improving infrastructure, and addressing climate change. We want to hear your thoughts and ideas and appreciate and value your feedback.

If you experience any difficulty using this form, you can also email your responses to replowen@capitol.hawaii.gov. Mahalo for participating!



Bill Signing ceremony on World Oceans Day, 2021



Bill signing ceremony for clean transportation bills, 2021

Rep Lowen Attends the United Nations Climate Change Conference and the Legislative Energy Horizon Institute

Rep. Lowen had the opportunity to attend the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26) in Glasgow, Scotland. The COP, or Congress of the Parties, is a global conference that takes place every year where heads of state come together to negotiate about how to address urgent climate issues. She attended as part of a delegation of sub-national leaders to share the message that states and cities are leading on taking climate action, even if our federal government is not. With Hawaii on the front lines of climate change, both in taking bold policy initiatives and in terms of the impacts that we are already experiencing here, the COP 26 was a valuable opportunity to learn from experts from across the planet, and to share our experience here in Hawaii with the rest of the world. Rep. Lowen also attended the Legislative Energy Horizon Institute (LEHI) in Washington, DC. LEHI is an educational intensive for state leaders who work on energy policy to help legislators more effectively navigate energy issues faced in their communities. The knowledge gained from both of these events will support Rep. Lowen's continued work as Chair of the Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection. Strict COVID-19 protocols were followed for all events.



Attending the LEHI conference in Washington, DC

Update on District 6 Capital Improvement Projects

Kailua Pier

\$150,000 was secured in 2020 to replace the existing wooden loading dock adjacent to the boat launch ramp. The DLNR Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation is in the process of executing a contract for construction. Estimated construction start date is February 1, 2022 with completion by June 1, 2022.

Kealakehe Elementary School new classroom building

Nearly \$15 million was earmarked in 2020 for a new classroom building at Kealakehe Elementary School. The project is in its pre-final design phase and is expected to be out for bid in 2022, with estimated completion by June 2023.

Kealakehe High School all-weather track

On October 21, 2021, the DOE announced that a contract has been awarded for the construction of a new all-weather synthetic track at Kealakehe High School. This nearly \$3 million project has been in the pipeline for many years.

Holualoa Elementary School Master Plan

The Master Plan planning segment was recently allotted design funds in anticipation of the completion of the Master Plan. A consultant selection was made recently and a design scope meeting is anticipated by the end of the year.

Kahakai Elementary School bridge

\$2.5 million was secured this year for an ADA-compliant bridge connecting building A to building B at Kahakai Elementary School. Funds release for the design contract is expected by the end of 2021. Building B was constructed before ADA requirements were mandatory and does not have an elevator or restroom facilities on the second floor. Building A has both an elevator and restroom facilities on the second floor. Connecting the two buildings will satisfy ADA requirements and improve the school's tsunami evacuation plan.

Kona Airport Federal Inspection Services Building

The new permanent Federal Inspection Services facility at Ellison Onizuka Kona International Airport (KOA) opened in October – two months ahead of schedule. Rep. Lowen helped secure funding in 2018 for this project which was necessary to maintain KOA's status as an international airport and to ensure that arriving visitors have a safe and positive experience entering the state.

La'i'opua Village 4 Subdivision, Phase 2 – Hema

Over \$11 million in funding was released in October for infrastructure and development of affordable residential lots on DHHL land. This will help to address the need for affordable housing in Kona starting with DHHL beneficiaries.



Speaking about civics with 8th graders from Ke Kula O Ehunuikaimalino



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Sign up for Rep. Lowen's e-newsletters
at mailchi.mp/capitol/replowen

COVID-19 Resources

General Contacts

Aloha United Way: 211

Civil Defense: (808) 935-0031

Police non-emergency: (808) 935-3311

Unemployment

Information & FAQs

hawaiiunemploymentinfo.com

labor.hawaii.gov/covid-19-labor-faqs

Appointments for UI/PUA issues

labor.hawaii.gov/ui/appointments

Travel

hawaiicovid19.com/travel

Housing

Rent & Utility Assistance

hawaiicountyrap.org

Landlord-Tenant Mediation West Hawaii Mediation Center

(808) 885-5525

whmediation.org

Legal Aid Society

1 (800) 499-4302

legalaidthawaii.org

Food Assistance

The Food Basket

(808) 322-1418

hawaiifoodbasket.org

The Salvation Army

(808) 331-1307

hawaii.salvationarmy.org

Data

hiema-hub.hawaii.gov

health.hawaii.gov

Testing & Vaccines

www.hawaiicounty.gov/coronavirus

Testing Information

(808) 961-8665

hawaiicovid19.com/testing-isolation-quarantine

Dept. of Health Vaccine Info

(808) 974-5001

hawaiicovid19.com/vaccine

