

Senator Michelle Kidani

(D) Senate District 18 – Serving Mililani Town, Waipio Gentry, Waikele, Village Park, Royal Kunia



Aloha friends and neighbors,

Our new legislative session has begun, with opening ceremonies this week at the State Capitol, and much to look forward to. Beginning in December, the respective Senate and House budget committees conducted a lengthy series of hearings with state agencies about their expenditure proposals for the two years beginning July 1. Some of the specific bills I have introduced this week are listed on page 2 of this newsletter and we will soon begin hearings on those and dozens of other legislative proposals.

There are several ways you can follow our work and track specific issues that may be of interest to you. The Legislature's online site has a great search function where you can find bills and resolutions, review hearing notices, and even submit testimony on bills by email directly to committees. The site has won awards for being comprehensive and easy to use; check it out <http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov>.

Many hearings are covered on `Olelo's community access channels through Capitol TV. You can watch on TV, on your computer or mobile device. For scheduled hearings, log on to <http://www.capitoltv.org>.

And if you need assistance in learning about the legislative process and how you can have a say in our deliberations, the Legislature's Public Access Room (PAR) - in room 401 on the fourth floor of the Capitol - has a great staff and many resources to help you get acquainted with issues as they are debated. Use these resources online at <http://lrbhawaii.org/par/>, call them at 587-0478, or stop by to chat with the helpful and knowledgeable staff. *Citizen participation in our process is always welcomed and encouraged.*

In just a couple of weeks we will be celebrating the arrival of the **Year of the Ram** - or as some call it, the Year of the Sheep or Goat - in the Chinese lunar calendar. In reading about the Year of the Ram, I was struck by the optimistic tone for the year before us. Traditions speak of "favorable changes" and a period of well being in the upcoming year, with a "newly gained faith in stable economic growth." All of this should be assured, the ancients say, with "diligence applied to hard work to ensure prosperity." Sounds like a great way to move forward in 2015. Kung Hee Fat Choy!

Me ke Aloha Pumehana,



2015 ~ Year of the Ram

Relief is on the Way!



ARTIST'S RENDITION
Design details not to scale and are subject to change.

Waikele Traffic flow improvements coming

Construction is finally underway on the Lumiaina traffic improvements. The project will add a dedicated left-turn lane from the intersection at Lumiaina Street northbound onto Kamehameha Highway toward Mililani. Traffic signals will be modified to provide a left-turn green arrow for these lanes. DOT says the new turn lane will help to move Mililani-bound vehicles through the intersection with each green light cycle and reduce traffic congestion.

Motorists are advised to anticipate delays and allow extra time for getting through this area while the construction continues into June.

Opening Day at the State Capitol – Wednesday, January 21, 2015



Literally hundreds of people stopped by my State Capitol office yesterday as the Legislature began its sixty working day session—a great opportunity to renew acquaintances with old friends and welcome new ones. **Governor David Ige, first lady Dawn Ige and their son Matthew** were among the visitors.



With humility and gratitude I begin my seventh term as your elected Senator from District 18. My total commitment to our communities remains steadfast. I pledge to do what is best for the people of Hawaii.



Others included longtime Mililani resident and former State Senator **Randy Iwase** who has been nominated by the Governor to be new Chair of the Public Utilities Com-



Principals from Waipahu and Mililani joined us on opening day – including (at left) **Keith Hayashi** (Waipahu High School), **Elynne Chung** (Mililani Middle), **Sheldon Oshio** (Waialele Elementary) and **Heather Wilhelm** (Mililani Uka Elementary). In the back row, **Dr. John Brummel**, former Mililani High Principal, now with Central District responsibilities. Principal Hayashi (center of the photo above right) also brought the Waipahu Complex Team – from left, **Hanh Nguyen**, Principal at August Ahrens Elementary, **Randell Dunn**, Waipahu Intermediate, **Kent Matsumura**, Honowai Elementary, **Pat Anbe**, Kaleiopu'u Elementary, along with Principal Oshio (far right) and (in front) **Christy Nishimura**, School Renewal Specialist, and **Lisa Ynigues**, Acting Principal at Waipahu Intermediate.

Some of the bills I plan to introduce this week include . . . a bill that would establish a pre-kindergarten program in Hawaii under the Executive Office on Early Learning and other measures to support early childhood education; *a bill that would give a tax break to our teachers who spend their own money for classroom supplies and resources; *bills to strengthen governance, accountability and financial stability for our public charter schools; *a bill that would add a second student member to the Board of Education, and explore the possibility of giving student members a vote on the Board; *a 'Safe Schools' anti-bullying program to assure positive learning environments; *a proposal for mandatory DNA collection from persons arrested for violent crimes.



My office staff is always ready to assist. From left, Legislative Aides **Trevor Nagamine** and **Jim Manke**, and to my left, **Geraldine Kaneshiro** and **Joan Manke**, along with Office Manager and Education Committee Clerk **Park Kaleiwahea**.



The media production crew from **Waipahu Intermediate** stopped by to interview me for 'Olelo's *Capitol Commentary* series. That's host **Casey Jane Tapaoan** with the mike.

The full crew: **Henry Acosta, Camille Apuya, Casey Jane** and **Kyle Daquioag**. →



KEEP HAWAII'S HEROES

SAVE OUR BASES, OUR COMMUNITIES DEPEND ON IT

FORT SHAFTER ★ SCHOFIELD BARRACKS

*More than 20,000 signatures
on the petition to the Pentagon ~
Listening Sessions scheduled
next week in
Honolulu and Wahiawa*

Together with the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii Military Affairs Council, State lawmakers are urging residents in their districts to become involved in a petition drive aimed at the U.S. Department of Defense. The Pentagon has said it envisions a reduction in uniformed Army personnel and civilians at Oahu bases, including Schofield Barracks, of nearly 20,000 people – with the attendant loss of as many as 30,000 family members. That amounts to about 5 percent of Oahu's population.

We know how important our Army families are to our Central Oahu communities and the entire state, and a reduction as discussed would be devastating. More than 20,000 people have already signed a petition urging the Pentagon to reconsider its proposed cuts; if you haven't already done so, you can make your voice heard by signing the petition you can find online at KeepHawaiiHeroes.org.

You can also hear an in-person presentation from the Army at Listening Sessions scheduled for later this month – **Tuesday, January 27 at 6:30 p.m. at the Hale Koa Hotel** and **Wednesday, January 28 (also at 6:30) at Leilehua High School**.

*There will be opportunities for public comment.
If you wish to be heard, you must register in advance at the online site above.*

Free tax season assistance available

Once again this year I am pleased to be a legislative sponsor for the **free tax assistance** program organized by the Hawaii Alliance for Community-based Economic Development. Eligible taxpayers can have their federal and state tax returns prepared at no charge by IRS-certified volunteers. To determine if you are eligible, call 426-3858.

Following a January 31 kick-off event at the State Capitol – tax help by appointment only – assistance will be available mid-February through mid-March at the Mililani Branch of the **Hickam Federal Credit Union** on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Call 423-1391 for an appointment.

From early February through dates in March, free tax return preparation will also be available on Tuesdays, Thursdays and some Saturdays at **Leeward Community College**. Inquire at info@hawaiiitaxhelp.org.

Tax assistance is also offered for low- to moderate-income seniors (over 60 years of age) by **AARP Hawaii**. Exact locations in our area are to be announced later this month. Check online at www.taxaidhi.org or call 545-6016.



*New
at the
Capitol
and in
Congress*



Since the last issue of my newsletter in late November, leadership in the Governor's office has changed and a new member of Congress has officially taken office.

At left, former Senator **David Ige** takes the oath of office as Hawaii's new Governor with our first lady, Dawn Ige, at his side. Hawaii Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald administered the oath in accordance with the State Constitution – at noon on the first Monday in December.

At right, newly-elected Congressman **Mark Takai** was in Hawaii last week for a ceremonial swearing-in for family and friends (after officially taking the oath of office in Washington, D.C., on January 6) at the Federal Courthouse. Congressman Takai's First Congressional District includes nearly all of the communities in Hawaii Senate District 18 that I represent.

In our Communities



Here's the wind-up . . .

It was a privilege and an honor to be selected to throw out the first pitch that officially opened the 2015 Central Oahu Youth Baseball League at Mililani District Park earlier this month.

Several hundred youngsters were in uniform - including the Pirates (*at left*) – along with volunteer coaches and players families who will enjoy their teams' seasons over the next few months.



Waipahu High School doubles-up on LifeSmarts competition . . . again!

Four teams of high school students will participate in February's annual LifeSmarts consumer education competition. Two of them are from Waipahu High School! The day long game-show style event tests competitors' knowledge of consumer rights and responsibilities, personal finance, health and safety, technology and the environment.

One of Waipahu's two teams became state champs last year and went off to the finals on the mainland. They hope to repeat this year and take a spot at the nationals in Seattle in April.

Waipahu Team 1: Marc Ramirez, Renz Sagabaen, Cia Dela Cruz and Jimwel Aguinaldo. Waipahu Team 2: Edsen Casintahan, Domingo Dumbrigue, Alysha Paz, Marjorie Raquiz and Lawrence Deleon.

Good luck to the students and to advisor **Cindy Takara**, WHS Business Learning Center Coordinator! WHS faces Campbell High School and 'Iolani School in the February 7 state finals.



Focus on our Schools



At the lava's leading edge . . .

Earlier this month, I traveled to Hawaii Island with Rep. Richard Onishi to get a first hand update on the way the Department of Education has responded to the approaching lava flow from Kilauea that threatened the town of Pahoa, including **Pahoa and Keonepoko Elementary Schools**.

With me at the Pahoa Transfer Station are (*from left*) **Darryl Oliveira**, Hawaii County Civil Defense Director, and Area Superintendent of Education for Ka'u, Kea'au and Pahoa **Keoni Farias**.

While the students have been displaced from their home campuses, the DOE has used the experience as a "teachable moment," integrating volcano science and cultural perspectives into their instruction.

A visit to the **University Lab School** this week gave us the opportunity to review facilities needs as well as learn about the innovative ULS approach to instruction.

With me *at right*, fronting the iconic Castle Memorial Hall are my colleague **Senator Ron Kouchi**, **Principal Keoni Jeremiah**, **Denise Yoshimura-Yamamoto**, a lab school parent and board member, **Research Coordinator Miki Tomita**, and **Business Manager Shareef Wang**. We are fortunate to include Denise and Shareef as members of our Mililani community.



In late November, educators from Oahu schools were invited to share and learn contexts in which we can more substantially empower our schools to initiate programs that are meaningful to individual campuses. Principals **Keith Hayashi** from Waipahu High School and **Fred Murphy** from Mililani High School (with me in the photo *above right*) were both at the all-day session at Moanalua High. Leadership from the top is essential to success, and Waipahu and Mililani High Schools are prime examples of that combination to the benefit of their students.