

Senator Michelle Kidani

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



Aloha, friends and neighbors:

Among the many bills before us this session are measures that would help Hawaii reach its stated energy self-sufficiency goals over the next several years. Two of them worth watching have to do with solar energy, and are discussed in terms of the effects they could have to help consumers take advantage of incentives for installing energy-saving technologies for their homes.

Late last year, the administration restructured solar energy tax credits because they were costing the State more than had been anticipated. The credits were not eliminated, but, in simple terms, the rules were adjusted so homeowners are no longer able to claim credits for multiple systems for their homes when in fact they were installing just one system with multiple parts.

The Senate's Committee on Ways and Means, for which I am Vice Chair, is this week considering **Senate Bill 623** to reaffirm the tax credit program, but more clearly regulate the incentives as a matter of law rather than leaving interpretations to tax administrators.

Another measure, **Senate Bill 1087**, would establish a State fund from which consumers could apply for low-cost loans to help meet the high up-front costs of installing such things as solar water heaters or rooftop photovoltaic systems. They would repay the loans over time from the savings on their electric utility bills. Hawaii could be a national leader with this initiative; SB 1087 is pending approval by the full Senate this week.

The stated goal of the Hawaii Clean Energy Initiative is that Hawaii achieve 70 percent clean energy by 2030, with 30 percent from efficiency measures and 40 percent coming from locally generated renewable resources. These are ambitious targets, and hopefully consumers will buy into a PV system with appropriate assistance. It is our obligation as legislators to assure careful long term planning for the fiscal impact any incentives might have on the State treasury. It's a delicate balancing act that we will be monitoring.

Me ke Aloha,

A great season to be a Mililani Trojan sports fan!

Both the **girls and boys varsity soccer teams** won the OIA Championships this year. The girls finished fourth overall in the state tournament, and I look forward to congratulating them personally at their banquet early in March. I was privileged to join the boys team, their coaches and families at their celebration last weekend.

The **MHS boys swim team** won their seventh straight OIA title, finishing third in the state team standings.

Both the girls and boys basketball teams advanced to post-season play in their respective tournaments and both teams made it into the quarterfinals.



Mililani High School Varsity Boys Soccer—2013 OIA Champions

Congratulations to the Mililani High School Varsity Boys Soccer Team! The Trojans won the OIA championship for the fifth time in six years, and their tenth championship since 2002, allowing their opponents only two goals during the entire regular season. The boys advanced to the state tournament, finishing in sixth place overall.

Honoring Mililani's Chelsea Robinson

Meet Chelsea Marie Robinson, Distinguished Young Woman of Hawaii for 2013. DYW was formerly known as the Hawaii Junior Miss program, and is the state's oldest scholarship program for high school girls.

Chelsea is the daughter of Charles and Sherry Robinson, and is a senior at Mililani's Hanalani School. As might be expected, she is a standout student, has starred in Hanalani's stage musicals for the last two years, and is active in her church and community volunteer activities.

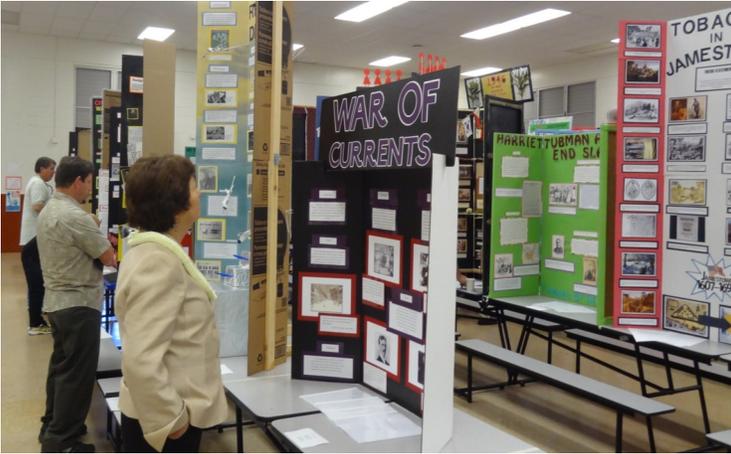
For being selected Hawaii's Distinguished Young Woman, Chelsea won a four year scholarship to Hawaii Pacific University where she plans to enroll in the fall. This summer she will be off to Mobile, Alabama, to compete with young women from 49 other states for additional scholarship awards.

Congratulations, Chelsea, and best wishes for success in Mobile, in your college career, and for many more years to come!



My Senate Colleagues and I welcomed Chelsea to the State Capitol a few days ago to present her with a certificate of congratulations. With me in the front row above, Karlie Boe, Hanalani Upper School Administrator, Hanalani Upper School Principal Winston Sakurai and Academic Counselor Rochelle Sakurai, Dr. Ligaya Stice, director of the Hawaii Distinguished Young Woman program, Chelsea's sister Brittany and mom Sherry Robinson, our guest of honor, and at right, Senate President Donna Kim.

Mililani High School Hosts Central District History Day Exhibits



Under the watchful eye and acknowledged expertise of Mililani history teacher **Amy Perusso**, MHS hosted the Central District Schools History Day Competition on Saturday, February 9. Amy is **Hawaii History Teacher of the Year** and represented our state in the National Teacher of the Year program.

I stopped by the school to see the exhibits as students waited for results of judging. *In the photo at left*, I am learning about The War of Currents, which wasn't a war at all. It had to do with the disagreement between Thomas Edison and George Westinghouse in the 1880s over whether alternating current (AC) or direct current (DC) would be the standard for the transmission of electricity in the U.S. AC was eventually adopted as the standard. DC prevailed in Europe.

You can learn something new everyday!

Congratulations, MHS History Day Winners!

-**Individual Research Essays:** Adrienne Unpingco, Caytlin Yoshioka, Clarence Roco

-**Group and Individual Documentary:** Team of Mart Joshua Lopez, Galibert Caraveo and Brysen Pasion, and team of Malia Moscatello, Frances Eves and Kelsey Asbery

-**Group Performance**—Team of Johnathan Harling-Gray, Myla Pereira and Iris Osborne; team of Samantha Hunter, Kimi Lynn Okikawa-Nakagawa, and Toby Frigillana; team of Allysen Manding, Monica Gerber and Princess Lynne De Dios

-**Group and Individual Web Site**—Team of Samantha Alvarado and Travis Wong; Vivian Fang; team of Laura Ambrosecchio and Pualei Ako

-**Group and Individual Exhibit**—team of Jaelyn Tanga and Melanie Tsuda; Janelle Lau; Sean Wallace

Good luck to all of these students who go on to compete at the State History Day contest at Windward Community College in April

The Congressional Gold Medal, awarded in 2011 to Nisei World War II veterans (*circled in the photo at right*) began a nationwide tour last month at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans.

One of the speakers at the event was **Megan Madeira, Mililani High School Class of 2013** and a Hawaii U.S. History Day Contest winner, at right in the photo (courtesy Wayne Catalana).

The program included a moment of silence for the late U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye of Hawaii who passed away in December.





The only state-owned film studio in the U.S.



As Vice Chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, I am responsible for putting together the Senate’s budget plan for State projects that will be funded for construction, repairs and maintenance. I have toured facilities statewide to see first hand the wide variety of properties the state owns and must maintain.

Earlier this month, several Senators toured the **State Film Studios** adjacent to Kapiolani Community College and Diamond Head. The film industry brings in millions of dollars in revenues to Hawaii each year, but the studios are in need of major repair and renovation work.

Later that day, we also visited the State’s **Foreign Trade Zone** warehouses along the Honolulu waterfront, also seeking funds this year for needed upgrades.

In the photos above: upper left, Hawaii Film Commissioner Donne Dawson, Senator Suzanne Chun-Oakland and I are in an old warehouse filled with props from the various TV shows that have used the studios since the 1970s. Upper right, Commissioner Dawson explains the layout of the state’s 7.5 acres property to Senators in front of the Production Offices, now being used by staff from the film *Hunger Games*. Lower left, along with Senators Chun-Oakland and Brickwood Galuteria, we are in the main sound stage building with 16,500 square feet of available space —barely adequate for television productions, but often now used for major feature films as well.

The Senate Committee on Education held a hearing in late January to receive an update on the *Race to the Top* education improvement challenge. That sounds straightforward enough, but it was out of the ordinary in at least one respect. It was the first time the new teleconference system was used to receive live video testimony from a neighbor island. In the photo at right, we heard from Principal Chad Farias at Keaau Elementary School on the Big Island.



Star Struck! It’s hard to resist being photographed with celebrities, and cameras were everywhere earlier this month as Steven Tyler, lead singer with the band *Aerosmith*, and drummer Mick Fleetwood of the band *Fleetwood Mac* were at the Capitol. Both musicians have homes on Maui, and they came to testify on a bill regarding privacy in circumstances where there is a reasonable expectation that their personal activities not be photographed. Tyler and Fleetwood, along with attorney Dina LaPolt (photo at right) testified on SB 465 before the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill has not been scheduled for further action.

Legislature's funding contributes to public/private partnership for Waipio Neighborhood Park

It was a true pleasure to join with community leaders, several of my colleagues in the Legislature, and private agencies who all contributed to the construction of a first class batting cage at Waipio Neighborhood Park.

So many elements came together to make this a real success story, and we are grateful to contributing partners including **Waipio Little League, Albert C. Kobayashi, Inc., Ironworkers Union, Ushijima Architects, engineering consultants KSF, Inc., Hawaiian Cement, Zippy's and Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell.**

Special thanks to the generous donation from the **Shane Victorino Foundation** that matched the legislature's allocation of funds in the amount of \$25,000 to complete the project. Shane is of course well known as one of the most successful major league baseball players from Hawaii, and he was on hand personally to dedicate the cage that now bears his name. It will be an inspiration to future generations of youngsters who practice and play at this park that has already been home field to champions.



Photos by Johnelle Souza



Tax season is here and many Hawaii residents are looking for filing assistance. The good news is that volunteers are standing by to help. Now through April 11, AARP-trained and IRS-certified volunteers are available throughout the state to help prepare basic federal and state tax forms for low-to-moderate income individuals and families. **In our area help is available from noon to 4 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays, at Wahiawa Public Library, 820 California Avenue.**

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide is the nation's largest, free, volunteer-run tax preparation and assistance service for low and moderate-income taxpayers, with special attention to people age 60 and older. Last year in Hawaii, Tax-Aide volunteers helped 15,745 clients file federal and state returns free of charge.

In February 2012, state attorneys general and the federal government announced a historic joint state-federal settlement with the country's five largest mortgage servicers: **Ally/GMAC, Bank of America, Citi, JPMorgan Chase and Wells Fargo.**

Distressed homeowners who may have had their mortgages improperly foreclosed or who may have had difficulty when attempting to refinance their underwater mortgages may be eligible for relief as a result of this landmark settlement.

The State Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs has begun an advertising campaign to help answer questions about how Hawaii borrowers can be helped. The ad campaign also warns consumers about possible scams that surface when unscrupulous predators falsely claim they can help.

Visit the DCCA Web site – HFIC.Hawaii.gov – or call 587-3222 for answers to questions you may have.



HAWAII'S FORECLOSURE
INFORMATION CENTER

Learn more about foreclosure options, how you might qualify for mortgage modifications and how you can save yourself from mortgage rescue fraud through the State's new foreclosure resource. Go to:

HFIC.Hawaii.gov