

Senator Michelle Kidani

Twenty-eighth Hawaii State Legislature

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



Chair, Committee on Education

**Vice Chair, Committee on
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Aloha Friends and Neighbors,

With elections behind us, much of our focus is now on the 2017 Legislative session that will convene in just a few weeks. Last week, my colleagues and I met to review Senate leadership responsibilities, and I have accepted an appointment to serve as Vice President of the Senate.

I am pleased to be able to continue as Chair of the Senate's Committee on Education. The committee is responsible for oversight of early education, all public schools (including charter schools), continuing education, and our many public libraries. I see this as especially important to schools in the several communities in my Senate District 18 that demonstrate initiative, innovation and resourcefulness in their work on behalf of our elementary and middle school students and the young men and women in Mililani and Waipahu High Schools. They all continue to amaze us with their exceptional academic and athletic successes.

During the several months following our 2016 session, I was invited to a number of national education conferences on the mainland, with expenses for most of them paid by the sponsoring professional organizations. At meetings of the National Conference of State Legislatures in Portland, Oregon, I was elected Vice Chair of the NCSL Education Committee for a two-year term through 2018.

My fellow chairs of legislative education committees from all 50 states are anxious to share their success stories, and just as eager to learn about how other states meet the challenges we all share. Common barriers to student achievement include inadequate budgets, teacher shortages, and coming up with the most effective ways to implement new Federal legislation that will give the states more say in "managing" public education. We all benefit from our participation in these conferences and I am honored to accept this opportunity to serve in this important national forum.

A few weeks ago, the Board of Education announced plans to seek new leadership for the State Department of Education. Their stated goal is to hire a superintendent to "help the DOE continue its efforts to reduce the achievement gap and prioritize achievement for all students."

In all that we do, we lawmakers remain committed to a State government respectful of and responsive to the needs of all Hawaii residents and pledge our best efforts to meet those needs through prudent use of taxpayer dollars. As always, we welcome your ideas and input into our decision-making process.

Me ke Aloha Pumehana,

Filipino Veterans of World War II honored aboard USS Missouri



Domingo Los Banos

The nation's final 2016 Veterans Day observance took place aboard *USS Missouri* at Pearl Harbor. The program recognized the 250,000 Filipino nationals who fought alongside American forces in World War II in the Philippines, which at the time was a US territory. For their service, about 26,000 Filipinos were granted US citizenship and many settled in our islands. Keynote speaker at the afternoon ceremony was **Domingo Los Banos**, infantryman and longtime Hawaii public school teacher who has continued to tell the story of Filipino veterans and their ongoing effort to receive benefits. We honor their sacrifices on behalf of our country and their own homeland.

Above right, Mr. Los Banos received an American flag in recognition of his service.





Focus on Afterschool Activities

More than 300 youngsters from Oahu after-school programs staged an awareness assembly at the State Capitol last month. The Hawaii **Lights On Afterschool** rally was one of thousands of similar events held all across the country to celebrate afterschool programs and their vital role in keeping kids safe, inspiring them to learn and helping working families. Youngsters stopped in at our offices (*above right*) during the day to talk *enthusiastically* about their activities.

I serve on a working group that focuses on afterschool activities for intermediate and middle school students. Such programs at **Waipahu Intermediate School** include the UPLINK Character Education. **Mililani Middle School** has had an academics and athletics afterschool calendar that has received support from the R.E.A.C.H. initiative coordinated by Lieutenant Governor Shan Tsutsui.

New leadership and a sixth building at UH West Oahu

The University of Hawaii Board of Regents today approved the appointment of **Maenette Ah Nee-Benham** – pictured at right – to be the new Chancellor for the **UH West Oahu** campus. She would succeed now-retired **former Chancellor Rockne Freitas** and **Interim Chancellor Doris Ching** beginning in January. Chancellor-designate Benham has been serving as the first Dean of the UH Manoa School of Hawaiian Knowledge.



I have often referred to UH West Oahu as “our” UH campus because it serves so many students from our neighboring communities. In this current semester, just under 3,000 students are enrolled, and fully 20 percent of those students claim residence in the 96797 (Waipahu area) and the 96789 (Mililani area) zip codes.

As UHWO marks its 40th anniversary as a part of the University of Hawaii System of ten campuses statewide, the campus will celebrate another milestone as construction begins later this month on the new **Administration and Allied Health Building**. As depicted in the foreground of this artist’s rendering (*below left*), this sixth building on the campus will be a spectacular addition to the landscape that already has become a source of great pride for West Oahu.



The new building will house instructional facilities for students in the allied health professions that make up nearly 60 percent of the healthcare workforce, including community health, health information management, and long term care. The 43,000-square foot building will house classrooms and labs along with faculty and administrative offices.

Groundbreaking ceremonies are scheduled for Monday, November 28! We can all be proud of the progress UHWO has made since moving to this exciting new campus in Kapolei just four years ago.



The holidays are upon us – beginning with Thanksgiving next week – and Christmas and New Year’s will be here before we know it. My wish is that you all have good reasons to be thankful in 2016, and that you may enjoy the season in the company of family and friends.

Happy Thanksgiving and happy holidays to follow. Let’s do our best to end the year on a positive note and find new opportunities to celebrate in 2017!