

# Senator Michelle Kidani

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



Aloha friends and neighbors,

I am pleased to report that the State has released additional funds for another school construction project in our district. **Mililani High School** will benefit from \$250,000 for construction of a portable classroom for special needs students. This project is especially important, as it will accommodate students who are considered 'medically fragile' - students who either need specialized medical care or who may have an allergy or other condition so serious they need to be taught separately from other students.

Virtually every school in our district has had some kind of repair or maintenance work or new construction underway over the last couple of years. In addition to the project above **Waipahu High School's new track and athletic facilities** are in the design phase with \$755,000 released so far; **Kanoelani Elementary School's covered walkways** are being designed in preparation for construction with a total of \$750,000 allotted for this project; and construction of **Mililani Middle School's covered playcourt** should begin in a few months.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you'll find a summary of a recent report from State economists that notes our emphasis on state construction projects over the last few years has been a real boost for the construction industry and has helped to stabilize Hawaii's economy as we emerged from the recessionary years. As you will read, **private sector construction will be an important driver of the economy for the next few years.**

This week, an important deadline in the Legislative calendar is approaching. Bills in the Senate that are to 'cross over' to the House must be in their final form and 'decked' for final Senate votes no later than Friday, February 28. Check the next page for a summary of some important bills that are moving through the legislative process. As always, I encourage you to let me know how you feel about issues of importance to you and our communities. Contact information for my office is at the bottom of the page.

Me ke Aloha,



**Mark your calendars!  
Town Hall Meeting**

*The public is invited to a town hall meeting hosted by Senator Michelle Kidani ~*

**Wednesday evening  
April 2, 7:00 pm**

**Kanoelani Elementary  
School Cafeteria**

*Honolulu Mayor  
Kirk Caldwell  
will be present for  
a briefing on the new  
Emergency Medical Services  
facility to be built in Waipio*

## *This is front page news! On to the nationals!*



From left, State Securities Commissioner Tung Chan, team members Marc Ramirez, Cia Dela Cruz, Maximiano Saludares, Roel Ibanez and Mark Abucay (kneeling), Coach Cindy Takara and LifeSmarts coordinator Theresa Kong Kee.

We are so proud to acknowledge the teams from Waipahu High School and Mililani High who will go on to the mainland to compete against their peers in late April.

*At left*, the team from WHS that won the LifeSmarts consumer education contest.

*At right*, the MHS team of sixteen who excelled in their knowledge of the U.S. Constitution.



Sixteen students in Mililani teacher Amy Perruso's government and politics class will travel to Washington, DC, in late April. They will also be honored at the State Capitol in March as we celebrate student success during Education Week.



## Technology allows remote testimony

The Senate Committee on Education and the Committee on Technology and the Arts have led the way in encouraging the public to use technology to testify from a distance during hearings at the Capitol. *In the photos below*, we are receiving comments from students at **Mililani Middle School** who supported my **Senate Bill 2446** - to name the new public high school in Kihei, Maui, the **Patsy Takemoto Mink High School** as a tribute to the late Congresswoman's belief that education is the key to a successful and productive life. To learn more about testimony using technology, visit the Web at <http://capitol.hawaii.gov/videoconf.aspx>.

You'll find a description of the pilot program along with instructions and forms to sign up to testify.



**Legislative update . . .** By the end of this week, Senate Bills that have been through the hearings process will be positioned for final approval before they move to the House for further consideration. Among the bills that I introduced:  
**SB2324** – establishing an electric vehicle fee that would be paid into the Highway Fund for use in street and highway repair and maintenance. Currently, this fee is collected through gasoline sales. Hybrid and electric vehicles use no gasoline or significantly less fuel than other vehicles, and thus pay less into the highway fund, even though they use our roadways.  
**SB 2452** – exempting breastfeeding women from jury duty.  
**SB 2610** – requiring every public school in Hawaii to have at least one automated external defibrillator (AED) device on campus and available for use  
**SB 2916** – requiring state agencies to notify the Employees Retirement System about overpayments in error to state employees. Such overpayments could result in mistakenly higher pension payments.  
**Introduced two of these bills at the suggestion of district residents. Thank you for your input!**



**Congratulations  
Hawaii Army  
National Guard  
Colonel  
Keith Tamashiro!**

On Wednesday, March 5, Col. Tamashiro (longtime Mililani Mauka resident and Neighborhood Board member) will become **Brigadier General Tamashiro**, receiving his star in a pinning ceremony at the State Capitol.

## Construction leading the way

For several years, I have served as Vice Chair on the Senate's Committee on Ways and Means with responsibility for formulating the Senate's program for state construction projects. During that time, we have focused on such projects as a certain way to stimulate the economy and create jobs. A new report from the State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism validates that approach, and points to the construction industry as a key to stabilizing our economy and contributing to momentum for growth in the years ahead. This is DBEDT's first comprehensive report of the construction industry since 2000.

### From the report:

During the 2007-2013 period, the average annual CIP expenditure by the state government was \$1.1 billion, indicating that the state government used construction projects as a means to stabilize the economy. During the construction downturn between 2008 and 2011, state CIP expenditures accounted for a stable 16 percent of the total construction value.

The forecast for Hawaii's construction industry is for growth of 12.4 percent in 2014 and 8.3 percent in 2015. Construction job growth led Hawaii's economy adding 2,500 jobs in 2013 and the job growth will continue in 2014. There are a number of positive factors that will drive this growth including infrastructure projects, large scale commercial projects, and residential construction. The two most prominent of these are the Honolulu Rapid Transportation Rail and the Kakaako area development projects. Hawaii also appears to be well positioned to benefit from the military's "Pivot Towards Asia" policy of redeploying resources in the Pacific Region to which Congresswoman Colleen Hanabusa has referred. One example of this is the National Defense Authorization Act, which includes approximately \$400 million in military construction projects for the state.

The full report can be found on the DBEDT website at:  
[http://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/economic/data\\_reports/construction\\_industry.pdf](http://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/economic/data_reports/construction_industry.pdf)





**Honoring our champions** ~ I was pleased to be invited to the Mililani High School Varsity Football Team banquet, the very last event at Ige's Restaurant and 19th Puka. *Above left*, the wonderful coaching staff that led the Trojans to an undefeated regular season and the OIA Championship.

A couple of weeks later, **Coach of the Year Rod York** brought team captains and several other players to the State Capitol to be formally recognized in the Senate. *Above right*, players struck a 'bring it on!' pose with Senate Sergeant at Arms and former world boxing champion **Ben Villaflor** (front row in the dark jacket).

Science students from **Mililani and Waipahu High Schools** swept the top spots in their respective **Central and Leeward District Science and Engineering Fairs** this month. Out of the dozens of exhibits at each of the fairs, these project winners were selected to represent their schools at the INTEL International Science and Engineering Fair in Los Angeles in May.

**Congratulations students and teachers!**

**Mililani High School** ~ **Brandon Kinard**, Physics, 1<sup>st</sup> Place overall; **Tess Cramer**, Biology, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place overall

**Waipahu High School** ~ **Maria Jurado**, Chemistry, 1<sup>st</sup> Place overall; **Charlyn Manuyag**, Energy & Transportation, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place overall; **Jasmin Valera & Irene Kuikahi**, Environmental Sciences, 3<sup>rd</sup> Place overall

**Mililani High School** also took all of the top awards in the Senior Division at the **Central District History Day Fair**. MHS students submitted the best research papers, created the best Web sites, produced the best documentaries and created the best exhibits. We'll acknowledge these projects – and top students from the **Leeward District History Day Fair** coming up next month – in a future newsletter.

**College scholarships available to Hispanic students**

The National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL) is now accepting applications for the **John S. Martinez Leadership Scholarship**. NHCSL will award eleven scholarships to Hispanic public high school students who reside in the district of a Hispanic State Legislator - including the districts of **Mililani Senators Michelle Kidani and Donovan Dela Cruz**, both of Hispanic descent.

Students may apply for the one-time \$3,000 scholarship on the Web at [www.nhcsl.org](http://www.nhcsl.org). **Deadline for applications is March 15, 2014.**

To be eligible, students must be legal U.S. residents, have a 3.0 or higher grade point average and be in their junior or senior years in a high school in Senator Kidani's or Senator Dela Cruz's districts, and be nominated by the school principal, teacher or guidance counselor. An admission packet must be assembled as well.

"We believe there are many students in our districts who meet these qualifications," Senator Kidani said. "We are encouraging all of them to consider applying for this scholarship."

Following a meeting of the Mililani Town Association Board, I chatted with scouts from Troop 664 about "Constitutional Rights" to help them earn a merit badge. *From left below*, scouts **Kellan Chan, Andrew Morris, Alexander Babcock and Marcus Otaka**.

**Photo Gallery**



Mililani resident **George Ehara** was named **Outstanding Union Builder of the Year** by the Hawaii Regional Council of Carpenters. *From left above*, Carpenter's Union Financial Secretary **Ron Taketa, Jeanette and George Ehara and John White** of Pacific Resources Partnership.

Mililani schools celebrated the annual **Character Counts Fair** at Mililani Town Center. *At my table below*, **Joan Manke of my staff** helped me distribute **keiki ID kits** for family safety. **Character Counts fosters trustworthiness, respect, caring, responsibility, citizenship and fairness in our schools.**





~ An update on Access Learning ~

Last year, the Department of Education unveiled this pilot project to study the impact of technology and digital curricular resources on classroom teaching and learning. Many schools applied to be a part of the pilot—eight schools were selected, including Mililani Mauka and Mililani Waena elementary schools. Senate Education Committee Chair Jill Tokuda and I (as Committee Vice Chair) paid a visit to Moanalua Middle School to see how students are adapting to their new ways of learning. *A follow-up briefing with both the Senate and House Education Committees has been scheduled for this coming Friday, February 28, at 2:00 p.m., State Capitol room 309, so that all schools can share what they have encountered in implementing the program so far.* The two Mililani schools report that implementation in their classrooms is well underway, with all students and teachers equipped with MacBook Air computers or iPads. Students, staff and parents are all enthusiastic about the new teaching and learning process.



*Visiting Moanalua Middle School - home of the Mustangs! At left, an update on the project from Board of Education Chair Don Horner; below, Senator Jill Tokuda and I visit a classroom.*



*'Ime 'Ike ~ A new landmark for the Leeward Community College campus*

We look forward to the official dedication of the new Education Building - *'Ime 'Ike* - at Leeward Community College in just a few months.

Construction work will finish up over the summer, but already LCC has been able to use some of the classrooms on the lower floor for an expanding student population.

*Congratulations to Chancellor Manny Cabral for bringing this exciting new building project to a successful completion, creating a new look for the Leeward Campus.*

**Tax Time – Help is Available** - Many people are focused on getting information together for their federal and state tax returns at this time of year. Fortunately, there are a number of volunteer organizations in the community ready to help!

- ◆ **AARP** offers free assistance at Wahiawa Public Library on Tuesday afternoons and Friday mornings. Call AARP at 545-6016 for appointment or walk-in information.
- ◆ Again this year, the **Hawaii Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development** has tax-help hours on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and Saturday mornings at Leeward Community College. Call the Community Helpline at 2-1-1 or LCC at 455-0524 to make an appointment.
- ◆ Through **IRS Free File**, all taxpayers who made \$58,000 or less in 2013 are eligible to visit [www.irs.gov/freefile](http://www.irs.gov/freefile) to prepare and e-file their federal tax returns. About 100 million Americans – or 70 percent of taxpayers –are eligible for this free service.

***Commercial farmers are cultivating more land in central Oahu, and we are doing what we can to support and encourage them.*** Last month, my colleague **Senator Donovan Dela Cruz** and I had the opportunity to tour the farm operated by Larry Jefts in Kunia. Our discussions focused on several issues, including minimizing the use of pesticides and other techniques to assure timely delivery of Larry’s produce to markets. He does what he can to keep costs down so that Hawaii consumers can afford fresh, locally-produced vegetables. He’s been able to farm successfully for many years; several of his employees have worked most of their lives for him since he does pay competitive wages.



*Senator Dela Cruz and I checked Larry Jeft’s crop of tomatoes. They’re picked green and ripen on the way to local markets.*

Another of Larry’s concerns is maintenance of the Waiahole irrigation ditch and tunnel system that brings water from the Windward side to farms in central Oahu. Funding for maintenance and necessary repairs was included in the state Budget a few years ago, but unfortunately the State Department of Agriculture has not yet started the work.

My staff and I are working with the incoming director of the Department to make sure the funding does not lapse, or that the money is re-authorized.

*The Waiahole irrigation system is a 100 year old engineering marvel - carrying millions of gallons of water each day more than 25 miles from one side of Oahu to the other using only gravity flow.* →

