

# Senator Michelle Kidani

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



Aloha friends and neighbors,

As you will see in this newsletter, there is quite a bit of news to catch up on this month. First, let me note that some highlights of the Legislative session as they affect District 18 can be found on page 2 of this newsletter. We ended the session earlier this month with a change in leadership as Senator Ron Kouchi was elected Senate President. I remain as Chair of the Committee on Education, and will take on new responsibilities as Vice Chair of the Committee on Consumer Protection and Health.

The two high schools in our communities ended the year on truly impressive notes. First, a new report on college and career readiness shows that Hawaii's students have made significant improvements in reading and math scores, early college credit attainment and college enrollment. The report listed **Waipahu High School** as one of five schools that made significant gains of ten percentage points or more in college enrollment over the last 2 years. About 43 percent of Waipahu grads went to college after high school in 2012. The Class of 2014 sent 53 percent of its graduating seniors to college - a terrific percentage increase and true validation of Principal Keith Hayashi and his team that have focused on these outcomes over the last few years.

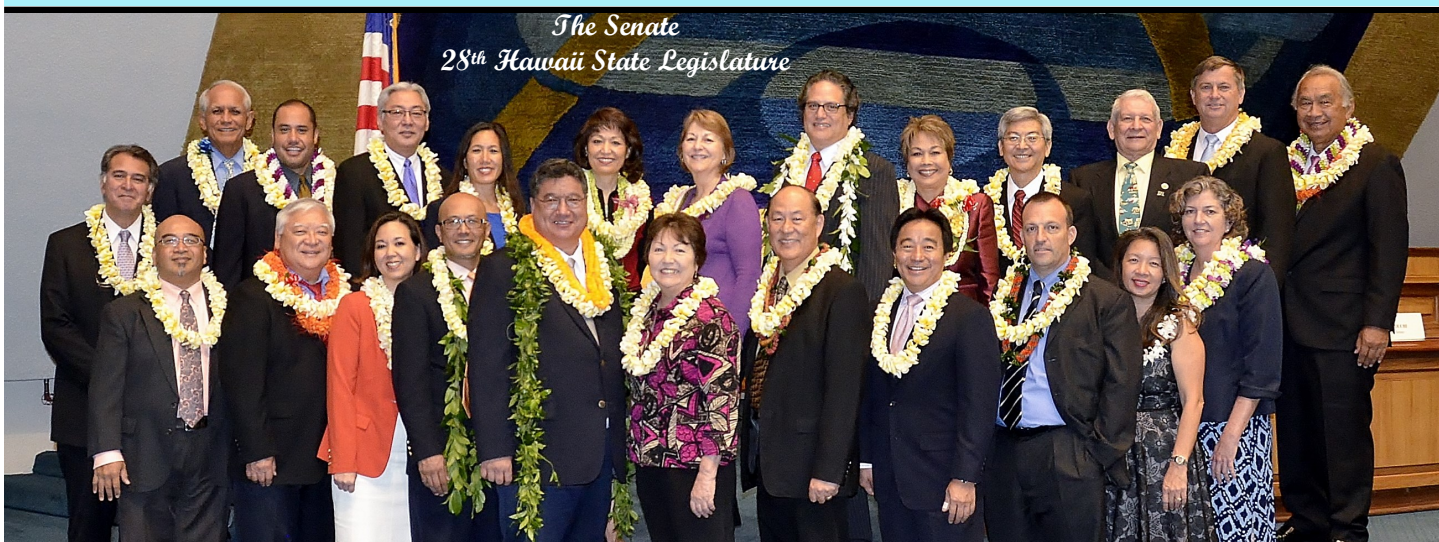
I look forward to congratulating the Waipahu Class of 2015 at the Blaisdell Center later this week, just as I did at the **Mililani High School** commencement ceremony over the past weekend.

Two notes regarding Mililani High - we have been congratulating Principal Fred Murphy for his leadership that has led to the school being ranked top public high school in Hawaii by *US News & World Report*. The publication measures student achievement based on math and reading proficiency, how well the school accommodates all of its students - not just those on the college track - and Advanced Placement class offerings and student participation in the AP program. This recognition of academic quality is well-deserved. It's become a hallmark of the solid educational experience that Mililani offers our youngsters.

MHS students also received word that for its exemplary record of leadership, service and activities that improve the school and community, the Associated Students of Mililani High School - the MHS Student Council - has been awarded a 2015 National Gold Council of Excellence Award by the National Association of Student Councils.

We applaud these achievements by Mililani students both in the classroom and in their school and home communities.

Me ke Aloha Pumehana,



*The Senate  
28th Hawaii State Legislature*

Members of the Senate gathered for a final group photograph as the 2015 regular session adjourned. New leadership is in place, with Senator Ron Kouchi (*to my right, front row with the yellow lei*) assuming the presidency.

# Notes from the Capitol ~ Focus on Education

With the adjournment of the Legislative session earlier this month, I am now able to report on some of the measures that will affect us in Senate District 18. When I accepted the Chairmanship of the Senate Committee on Education, I focused much of my attention on strengthening early learning programs.

In a tight budget year we did have some limited success, highlighted by the agreement to restore \$6 million to fund the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program for another year. POD has helped mitigate the negative impact of new rules for junior kindergarten enrollment that went into effect this year – affecting as many as 4,000 youngsters statewide.

The state still needs a comprehensive plan for early learning, and we passed another bill to officially establish a prekindergarten program under the Office on Early Learning that will be administratively assigned to the Department of Education next year.

New projects funded in the two-year budget or through grants-in-aid include:

- ◆ \$350,000 for upgrades to the **Waipahu High School Culinary Academy**
- ◆ \$1.45 million for a new covered walkway at **Kaleiopuu Elementary** in Village Park
- ◆ \$1.5 million for plans and design work for 15 new classrooms at **Mililani Middle School**
- ◆ \$500,000 for a school-wide upgrade to the electrical system at **Mililani Uka Elementary**
- ◆ \$24 million for the **UH West Oahu Allied Health and Administration building**
- ◆ \$50,000 for technology center upgrades at the **Filipino Community Center** in Waipahu
- ◆ \$140,000 for renovations in the performing arts facilities at the **Hawaii Okinawa Center** in Waipio
- ◆ \$17.25 million for land acquisition and construction for the rehabilitation or replacement of **Kipapa Gulch (Roosevelt) Bridge**



One bill we passed will have an effect on many families in the Mililani area as we phase out the so-called multi-track school calendar at **Mililani Middle School** and the three other Oahu schools where it is in effect. The scheme as it was originally envisioned was supposed to maximize use of school facilities with a minimum of break time during the school year. Teachers and administrators were clear in their message that the year-round schedules were not workable for faculty, facilities and families – and not especially effective in student achievement either. The \$1.5 million in the construction budget (above) is a first step in planning to accommodate all middle school aged students on the DOE's regular instructional calendar.

## Mililani and Waipahu student athletes excelled on the playing field during the spring sports season

◆ **Mililani teams** earned their way to three more OIA championships – varsity softball and boys and girls tennis.



In winning the OIA West and finishing the state tournament as runner-up, the **varsity softball team** placed a total of nine players on OIA and All-State teams as selected by league coaches and the media statewide.

**The Trojan tennis teams** won both the girls and boys OIA team championships, including wins in the OIA West boys and girls doubles championships as well. **Tennis coach Jason Agsalda** was named **Coach of the Year** for both the boys and girls West Division; 15 players – including **girls Player of the Year Haley Fujimori** – were named All-Stars.



◆ **Mililani golfers** placed six boys and six girls – including **OIA West Division Player of the Year Mari Nishiura** – on All-Star rosters.



◆ Also, six players from the boys volleyball team were named to OIA West All-Stars.

◆ **Waipahu High School** also placed six players on the OIA volleyball All-Star team lists; and seven Marauder players were named to the OIA West softball All-Stars.

*We know it takes a lot of hard work and discipline to participate in after-school athletics and that team members need to maintain good academic standing to play. Congratulations to everyone who commits to the team!*



**Senator Donovan Dela Cruz** joined me to say a big mahalo to **Chelsea Robinson** of Mililani who worked in my office as an intern during the Legislative session. Chelsea is a Hanalani Schools grad who just finished her sophomore year at HPU majoring in Political Science and Communications. She got a good taste of Legislative work while assisting with our Education Committee work. *Thank you, Chelsea!*

## **Update: Mililani recycling**

With the closure of the Reynolds Recycling location at Town Center of Mililani, residents are being directed to **RRR Recycling Services at the Park and Ride lot in Mililani Mauka**. The center has expanded its hours of operation and is now open seven days a week to accommodate the anticipated increase in customers: Monday – Friday 9:15-4:45, and on weekends 8-3:30.



## Reason to celebrate



**Mililani High School Class of 2015 ~ Aloha Stadium, Sunday May 24**

**Proud parents and other family members headed off to Aloha Stadium on Sunday** to congratulate the equally proud senior **Class of 2015** as their high school years officially came to an end. As noted elsewhere in the newsletter, the school has enjoyed an exceptional year both academically and in the successes of its athletic teams. Our Mililani community has embraced the school for its positive, nurturing environment that encourages creativity and values hard work that will serve its students well as they take next steps to fulfilling dreams. **Congratulations and thanks to teachers and school leadership for a great year!**



I was in the huge audience of teachers and guests from central Oahu schools when the HSTA recognized teacher excellence as the school year comes to an end. It was a fun event with many tables of teachers dressed in a variety of themed costumes, adding to the color and excitement. These five from Mililani schools were among those honored: **Darlene Fujimoto, Mililani High (a favorite teacher of both my daughters!); Rosanne Oda-Ching, Mililani 'Ike Elementary; Lynn Yoshioka, Mililani Middle; Bao Nguyen, Mililani Uka; and Jennelle Ichishita, Mililani Waena.**

It came as a total surprise to **Hanalani Schools Principal Winston Sakurai** when he was named **2016 Hawaii State Principal of the Year** by the Hawaii Association of Secondary School Principals. Winston has been upper school principal since 2008. The campus in Mililani has seen great progress in education and college preparedness under his leadership – fully 100 percent of graduates are accepted to a college or university.



The Island Insurance Foundation announced its annual Masayuki Tokioka Excellence in School Leadership Awards earlier this month. One of the semi-finalists this year is **Kanoelani Elementary School Principal Stacie Kunihisa** (surrounded by her students and colleagues at left); she received a \$2,000 cash award. We are so proud that yet another school administrator in our district has been recognized for her vision, commitment to community and entrepreneurial spirit. The other semi-finalist is **Malaea Wetzel**, Principal at Haleiwa Elementary; top honors went this year to Principal **Dean Cevallos** of Keaau High School on the Big Island.





## In Our Communities

### ***Congratulations graduates!***

It is always a pleasure to visit the campus of “our” university – UH West Oahu – especially for commencement exercises. Earlier this month, I attended ceremonies for this year’s largest-ever class of 226 graduates. The registrar’s office did a quick count for me and confirmed that UHWO is doing a great job of serving residents of our area. ***Nearly 28 percent of the class – a total of 63 grads – list Waipahu or Mililani zip code home addresses, validating our investment in this brand new campus to help fulfill the dreams of central and west Oahu students and their families.***

The student speaker – **Mellissa Lochman of Waipio** – is a perfect example of dreams fulfilled through hard work. Mellissa was born on Moloka`i, and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force after high school. She served our country for eight years before returning to Hawaii and was determined to become the first in her family to earn a college degree. In her years at UHWO, Mellissa served on the Communications Committee and Student Media Board and was editor-in-chief of the campus newspaper. She also worked as a graphic design student assistant in the Communications Department and is now UHWO’s very first graduate awarded a BA in Humanities with a concentration in creative media. Mellissa’s success story is typical of those that could be told about every one of UHWO’s 226 graduates. Congratulations to all of you who worked hard to earn your degrees, and good luck in pursuing the next chapter in your lives!



**With me above, Senator Mike Gabbard and UHWO student commencement speaker Mellissa Lochman of Waipio.**



**Honolulu Police Chief Louis Kealoha** accepted a Senate certificate recognizing the nearly 2,000 uniformed men and women of HPD for their selfless service to the people of Oahu. The City and County’s police force is among the top-20 largest for major cities in the U.S. The Department was honored at the annual banquet of the **Honolulu Police Community Foundation** that supports HPD with donations of equipment and scholarships for HPD families through privately-raised funds.

### ***A milestone anniversary . . .***

It was a day of celebration in mid-May when the Honolulu Community Action Program – HCAP – Head Start program marked its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of serving preschoolers and their families across the state. I served for a time as the Mililani Neighborhood Board’s representative to the HCAP Board and have been an enthusiastic fan of Head Start for many years.

The program is active in more than 80 locations on Oahu, including a half-dozen centers in the Honowai-Waikele-Waipahu area and several others in Kunia-Wahiawa-Helemano. Head Start brings in about \$15 million in Federal funding to our state each year. But more than that, the 1,700 youngsters in the program each year develop learning and social skills early in life that will serve them well through their school years and as tomorrow’s leaders in our neighborhoods.

Director **Lynn Cabato – a Mililani resident** – has been with Head Start for nearly 40 years, beginning as a Social Services Aide and as program head for the past decade. Lynn has willingly and passionately devoted her life to the program, nurturing and depending on the strong staff and community support that is essential to the strength of services that HCAP Head Start provides. ***Happy Anniversary!***



**With me at left, following a Waikele Elementary Head Start read-aloud event, Vice Principal Kevin Ginoza and Kapolei-to-Waipahu Head Start manager Suzie Uyeda.**



**With me from left, at the Head Start 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, policy council chair Jeselle Bassingthwaite, Senator Gil Riviere and Head Start Director Lynn Cabato.**