

Senator Michelle Kidani

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



Aloha friends and neighbors,

It has been two months since our last newsletter, and this edition will allow me to summarize some of the activities that have taken place in our communities. As you know, a good deal of my attention is focused on our public schools - including the ongoing efforts to make sure our campus facilities are safe, sound and secure. I am also so pleased to hear about the successes of our students who participate in extraordinary summer ventures and who are enrolled in programs that focus on career and college readiness. You'll find some of those stories in the next few pages.

As we all know, weather conditions have brought unusually high temperatures and extreme humidity to the islands this year, and the DOE has made it a priority to bring relief to students and teachers in our classrooms. I plan to meet with the department and with HSTA to discuss the status of heat abatement projects and priorities. And as part of setting campus priorities, I also met earlier this month with Central District principals to talk story and hear concerns. Principals are closest to the action on their campuses and play an important role in the planning process.

I often refer to the **UH West Oahu** as "our" university since it is the four-year UH campus in our part of the island. But beyond geography, UHWO offers a real alternative to UH Manoa with flexible scheduling, innovative programs and a great new campus that is a real source of pride for our central and West Oahu communities. This semester, there are about 2,700 students enrolled at UHWO. Of that total, 309 have home addresses in the 96797 zip code that encompasses Waipahu and adjacent neighborhoods such as Royal Kunia, Village Park, Waikele and Waipio that are in my district. Another 241 students live at 96789 zip code addresses in Mililani, the other part of Senate District 18. Those 550 students represent 20 percent of the campus population - a true indication that UHWO is providing higher education opportunities for this part of the island.

Campus Chancellor **Rockne Freitas** has brought stability and program innovation to the planning process and has been a passionate advocate for his campus, his colleagues and his students. "Rock" has announced that he will retire at the end of the year, capping a more than 20-year career in the University of Hawaii system. With his departure, the state will bid aloha to a devoted public servant who has always focused on the most effective ways to help others fulfill their dreams. The successes at UH West Oahu will be a fitting legacy to Rockne's years at UH and we wish him well in retirement.

Me ke Aloha Pumehana,

Preparing for the 2016 Legislative Session

While the Legislature's 60-day "work session" is scheduled from January through early May, lawmakers are always involved in numerous ways throughout the year to prepare for our formal proceedings. As Chair of the Senate's Committee on Education, I convened an informational briefing with my counterpart, **House Education Chair Representative Roy Takumi** (*photo at right*) to learn about pilot programs in five areas across the state designed to assure that students are reading at appropriate levels by third grade. We heard from the Department of Education as well as outside evaluators of the pilot program from the RAND Corporation.

This week, our two committees also received an update on the State Public Charter School Commission standards for evaluating charter school performance as charter school contracts come up for renewal. The discussion on this issue received extensive coverage in the media.



The next Legislative session convenes on Wednesday, January 20 - just a little more than three months from now. Your thoughts and comments on these and other issues are always welcome.

Student Success

Hawaii's cultural diversity a big advantage

Earlier this year, an article in MidWeek highlighted the successes of **Taylor-Anne Kim**, a proud member of the Mililani High School Class of 2016, who had just been invited to visit Japan through the Japan Exchange and Teaching Memorial program. She was the only Hawaii student invited among only 32 students nationwide. The students visited the Tohoku region of Japan and were able to witness the recovery efforts following the devastating 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Taylor-Anne returned from her three-week journey and is back in school. It was, she said, "an unforgettable experience."

"I was able to meet and talk with many different people of the Tohoku region and listen to their personal experiences with the disaster. It was a very educational trip that really put my Japanese language skills to the test, but that was one of the most fun parts of the trip. I could not have asked for a better way to spend my summer."



Taylor-Anne (left) and her host sister enjoy a green tea ice cream break



Out of 70,000, one pine left standing after the tsunami . . .

Taylor-Anne Kim photo

Taylor-Anne was urged to apply for the exchange visit by **Corey Zukeran**, her Japanese language teacher at Mililani. This semester she is doing presentations for her Advanced Placement Japanese language class and for the Mililani Japanese Honor Society. *Our congratulations to Taylor-Anne and her teacher Corey for taking advantage of this extraordinary opportunity.*

Hawaii high school students will soon have new opportunities to be recognized for their language abilities thanks to a new policy adopted this summer by the State Board of Education. The Board has approved the award of a Seal of Biliteracy to graduating seniors who show that they are proficient in English and another language – as demonstrated by testing through Advanced Placement exams or other means.

The ability to communicate in more than one language is a highly valued skill and can even be an important advantage when applying for many career opportunities. Some students may already be proficient in a language other than English if it's spoken in the home. The new Biliteracy program could serve as a real incentive to study that language more formally to reach a higher level of communications expertise.

I sponsored Senate Bill 900 in this year's legislative session to make sure Hawaii joins the increasing number of states who issue the Seal of Biliteracy, and I'm pleased that the Board and the Department of Education have moved quickly to follow up on this new program. A DOE task force is working on an implementation plan to be completed by the end of the year, and it should be ready for formal introduction for graduates in the Class of 2017.



Congratulations to **Caitlyn Estanique**, Waipahu High School alum, and **Darren Quevedo**, Mililani High, who have received scholarships for their college studies from the Honolulu Police Community Foundation. Caitlyn is a student in Chaminade University's Forensic Sciences course. Darren is in the Justice Administration program at UH West Oahu.

Mahalo to the HPCF for their support of our outstanding students!



Mahalo Rotary!
Our guests at Mililani Rotary - softball champs **Breli Agbayani, Trislynn Pangaoan and Lexie Tilton**

Youngsters from **Crush Black**, state softball champs in their age-group (mostly Mililani Middle 6th graders), were our recent guests at Mililani Rotary. The girls played in a national tournament in California this summer and are seeking donations to go to another mainland tournament (with head coach and former major league star **Benny Agbayani**) in March.

Send support to: Crush Softball, 95-719 Kahikinui Place, Mililani 96789.

Now that schools are back in session, volunteers from **Rotary Club of Mililani Sunrise** will be doing vision screenings for 3rd graders at all Mililani elementary schools.



Longtime Rotarian **Mel Kamasaka** "on duty" last week at Mililani Mauka

News from Our Schools



The DOE and Hawaii Arts Alliance are program partners for the federal **Turnaround Arts Initiative** being introduced in three Oahu schools. Pictured below right, Hawaii singer/songwriter **Jack Johnson** and actress **Alfre Woodward** joined me and **Senator Mazie Hirono** at the public announcement for the program that helps to improve academics through arts education. It will be introduced at Kalihi Kai and Waianae Elementary schools and Kamaile Academy Public Charter School. These schools will receive arts education training and resources, including teacher training, art supplies and musical instruments, and help from partner arts organizations.

Above, students at **Hale Kula Elementary** – the public school serving mainly military dependents on base at Schofield – are enjoying new classrooms this school year. The school was awarded a \$26.6 million grant by the U.S. Department of Defense. That grant and \$6.6 million from the DOE have given the school its first upgrades since it was built in 1959. The total project creates a new administration building, two-story classroom building, a student center and library-media center, additional classrooms and existing classroom renovations.



Waipahu Academies “Making a difference”

Waipahu High School Principal **Keith Hayashi** was absolutely beaming when he announced that the school’s Academy of Health Sciences and Academy of Natural Resources have been accredited by the National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC) earlier this month. The two WHS programs have been designated **National Model Academies** – the highest ranking possible – as judged against ten national standards. Only 72 career academies have been accredited nationwide this year. The WHS Health and Sciences Program is one of only 12 among the best in the U.S. The Academy of Natural Resources is the first in the country to meet the highest standards.



I was invited to the Waipahu campus to meet the accreditors when they came to evaluate the two programs. It was a universally positive experience, with Health and Sciences students offering basic health screenings, and student chefs from the Culinary Arts Academy serving a delicious meal. The culinary program and the Public Health and Human Services Pathway will be next up to seek national accreditation. These disciplines are among ten WHS academies whose junior and senior year students work with industry partners.

Career and college readiness have been a focus at the school under Principal Hayashi’s leadership. He points to the campus successes with this pledge: “All of us working together will continue to make a significant difference in the lives of our students.” ***Congratulations to teachers and students for the hard work that brings distinction to the Marauder Nation!***

← **WHS junior Sherry Bonilla, Health & Sciences Academy student ~ a blood pressure check for the Senator.**



Students from around the country gathered in Raleigh, North Carolina, this summer for the annual National Student Safety Program Conference sponsored by the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA). At the conclusion of the conference, two Hawaii students emerged as the National Students of the Year – **Miguel Flores of Campbell High School (below, left)** and **Miki Nishizawa from Waipahu High** - pictured with Sheree Jones of the sponsoring organization. The program is designed to promote safe driving practices to reduce traffic injuries and deaths.



Waipahu High students showcased their summertime graduate-level research in molecular biology at the school's first annual **Science Scholars Program Symposium (above)**. Using distance learning tools, they collaborated with Rutgers University scientists who reviewed student data and provided immediate feedback. Congratulations to teacher **Michael Sana**, who secured funding for the program. He’s encouraging other Hawaii schools to explore these kinds of opportunities.



Serving our Communities

I had a wonderful opportunity to present a congratulatory Senate certificate to Hawaii entertainer **Melveen Leed** at a recent performance. Melveen was named this year to receive the **Aloha Is** award from the Hawaii Academy of Recording Arts. The award was created in memory of the late Hawaii ukulele master and singer **Moe Keale**. Through her giving spirit and tireless efforts on behalf of many island charitable organizations, Melveen is the perfect embodiment of Aloha.

Mahalo!

I joined teams at the Region 119 AYSO opening day ceremonies a couple of weeks ago at 16 Acres Park, and the enthusiasm among the youngsters was contagious. Being a member of a team and wearing a uniform, learning and playing by the rules, and – thanks to AYSO’s “everyone plays” policy – being guaranteed a chance to run and kick in real games, is a nearly universal positive experience for our families.



Region 119 encompasses the communities of Mililani, Wahiawa and the local military communities of Wheeler and Schofield, along with families from other Oahu neighborhoods who choose to play in Mililani. The numbers are impressive – 1,500 families with 3,300 players and literally hundreds of volunteer leaders. Our hosts were Region 119 Commissioner **Jayson Correa**, and league president **Jamie Kahalewai**. They are looking forward to next year’s 40th anniversary season and are on the lookout for community and business partners. If you’d like to get involved and support our youngsters, contact them at **RC@mililaniayso.org**.

Did you know? Here’s some news you can use . . .



The Legislature amended Hawaii elections laws to allow voter registration online beginning this year.

Visit the Office of elections Web site at elections.hawaii.gov and click on **Register to Vote**. You’ll be able to update your registration, confirm your registration address and request to vote by mail. **Questions? Find answers at 453-8683 or inquire by email: elections@hawaii.gov.**

A simple home security system . . .

Put your car keys beside your bed at night.

If you hear a noise outside your home or someone trying to get in your house, just press the panic button for your car. The alarm will go off, and the horn will continue to sound until either you turn it off or the car battery dies.

This tip came from a neighborhood watch coordinator. Next time you come home for the night and you start to put your keys away, think of this: It’s a security alarm system that you probably already have and requires no installation. Test it. It will go off from most everywhere inside your house and will keep honking until your battery runs down or until you reset it with the button on the key fob. It works if you park in your driveway or garage.

If your car alarm goes off when someone is trying to break into your house, odds are the burglar won’t stick around.

After a few seconds, all the neighbors will be looking out their windows to see who is out there - and sure enough the criminal won’t want that.

And remember to carry your keys while walking to your car in a parking lot. The alarm will work the same way there.

