

Senator Michelle Kidani

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



Aloha friends and neighbors,

While I was not in support of a special session, Governor Abercrombie has now called on the Legislature to convene to consider a bill for marriage equality in Hawaii and by law we are obligated to convene. The session will begin next Monday, October 28, and there will be opportunities for the public to submit testimony to the committees that will consider the Governor's bill.

You may read the entire bill on the Web at:

http://governor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Marriage_Equity_Bill_AG_9_9_13.pdf

Once committee hearing times have been scheduled (possibly as early as 10:30 am on the first day of the session, October 28th), you may attend in person to offer comments or listen to testimony, send written comments by letter to the committees, or you may send your testimony by email to the committees through the Legislature's Web site: <http://capitol.hawaii.gov/>.

In February 2011, I supported Senate Bill 232 relating to civil unions. I might add that at that time I was quite touched by an email I received from a young gay soldier from Mililani who was in Afghanistan watching our proceedings on `Olelo TV. He basically stated that he was willing to die to protect our rights to say things that were being said, but as a gay man in the military, he had to hide the fact that he is gay because we would not fight for his equality.

Some believe we do not need further legislation as we already passed the civil unions bill. However, since the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was found to be discriminatory and unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in June of 2013, federal agencies are beginning to revise their federal benefits to comply with this ruling, including the IRS and the U.S. Treasury who have ruled that only same-sex couples who are legally married will be treated as married for federal tax purposes.

In 1998—fifteen years ago—the Hawaii State Constitution was amended to give the Legislature the discretion to limit marriage to opposite sex couples, and that discretion still remains with the Legislature. Although I do not believe civil rights issues such as marriage equality should be put to a vote, several polls in the past few years show that the people of Hawaii and across the nation have changed their views since 1998.

As a legislator, I took an oath to uphold the constitutions of the United States and the State of Hawaii. This is an issue of equal treatment and equal protection based on the U.S. Supreme Court ruling, including the overturning of Proposition 8 in California which prohibited same sex couples from marrying. Therefore I will support the proposed legislation. That being said, I strongly believe that clergy and churches should not be forced to open their facilities to perform ceremonies that are against their religious teachings and values. For your information, the bill the Governor has proposed does discuss this on pages 6 and 7 of the draft.

I do not take lightly my responsibilities as a legislator. As you can imagine, many people have contacted my office about this issue - many in support of the bill, many who oppose it. For those who oppose the marriage equality bill, I hope that you know I respect you and your religious beliefs but also support the constitutional rights of all citizens. I do appreciate hearing everyone's views on marriage equality and am grateful that you have allowed me to dialogue with you. My hope is that our special session will proceed with rational and civil debate.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

New rules for Schools ~ Families with youngsters nearing kindergarten age will need to know about new rules for enrolling in school that will be effective with the 2014-2015 school year. Starting August 2014, a child must be 5 years old on or before July 31 to enter kindergarten. The change is a result of Legislative action in 2012 to prepare the public school system for the introduction of universal preschool. Hawaii is currently just one of 11 states without state-funded preschool. The **Executive Office on Early Learning** has published an informative flyer about the new age requirements that is available on the Web at earlylearning.hawaii.gov. *If your youngsters are about to enter kindergarten, review the published information or call the Office on Early Learning at 586-0794.*



**KINDERGARTEN
AGE HAS
CHANGED!**



Good news for Central and West Oahu communities from the Capitol this month.

The State has released funds to the City and County of Honolulu to proceed with construction of a new emergency medical services facility in Waipio. A total of \$3.85 million will be available for the project that will greatly improve medical emergency response time in several of our neighborhoods.

In my July newsletter, I noted that I have been fighting for funds for a new ambulance base station in this location since I first became a Senator in 2009. Money was approved then, but the previous State and City administrations did not act in a timely manner to allocate the funds. I made sure that the money was re-appropriated this year so that this critically important project could proceed as quickly as possible. ***I am pleased to note that what the process was not able to accomplish in three years previously was done this time in just three months!***

This project becomes all the more urgent because, as many of you know, the EMS ambulance previously based at Kaiser Clinic in Waipio Gentry moved to 99-135 Koaha Place in Waipahu on October 1st. We are grateful to the city and state administrations for their quick action that will help to assure the safety and security of families in our communities.

With sorrow, we acknowledge the passing of one of Waipahu's 'best friends' – former **State Senator Cal Kawamoto** who served for ten years beginning in 1994. We remember his influential presence as head of the Waipahu Community Foundation, and as a strong advocate for Hawaii's Plantation Village and UH West Oahu. He continued to serve the Waipahu community as an elected member of the Neighborhood Board.

Cal was also in the U.S. Air Force for two decades and was an active member of VFW Post 1572.

Our condolences to Carolyn and his family. We will remember with fondness everything Cal did to make Waipahu a better place to live and work.

News item . . .

In case you missed it, you may want to check out *Star Advertiser* reporter Nanea Kalani's update on college and career preparation programs at Waipahu High School. You can find it on the Web at staradvertiser.com. Click on "back issues" and look for the story in the paper's September 29 edition. It describes the WHS GEAR UP college prep program in detail and reports on the joint informational briefing for the Senate and House Committees on Education in late September.

Committee members are pictured below with current GEAR UP Students - including Juanito Moises, National GEAR UP Student of the Year (below left).



Taking notice . . .

And speaking of Waipahu High School's programs of excellence, the October 10 edition of MidWeek highlights the great work of **WHS shop teacher Timothy In.** The former U.S. Air Force fighter pilot teaches students in the WHS industrial engineering technology pathway - officially as an instructor in Building and Construction Technology 1 and 2.

Congratulations Timothy for well-deserved attention to the talents as a woodworker that you share with your WHS students. Find the full story on the Web at:

<http://www.midweek.com/waipahu-shop-teachers-passions-driving-his-diverse-career/>

Waipahu Homecoming 2013



The Waipahu cheer team and the Marauder mascot invited me to join them for photo sessions at the WHS homecoming football game.

In the second year of team competition in the OIA Red Division, Waipahu fell to the McKinley Tigers by a score of 36-15.

Wait 'til next year!





A visit to Kalaupapa ~ The Aha Moku Advisory Council arranged for members of the Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs to visit Kalaupapa peninsula late in the summer. Above, Senators Kalani English (left) and Gil Kahele (right) and I paid our respects at Saint Damien's grave site. Later, Franciscan Sister Rose Ahuna gave me a tour of the home where Saint Marianne Cope lived. Both Hawaii saints ministered to Hansen's Disease patients at this isolated part of Moloka'i.



I was invited to tour the **Hui Malama Kako'o Cancer Support Group** at Pali Momi Medical Center by one of the Center's founders - Waipio Valley resident **Barbara "Pua" Iuli**. The Center offers patients and family members the opportunity to learn from others' experiences, exchange information and resources, ask questions and to benefit from expert speakers. In her role as a social worker at Pali Momi, Barbara was a founding facilitator of the Center in 1998. She's also been an involved resident of the Waipio Valley community, and is an elected member of the Mililani/Waipio Neighborhood Board. **Congratulations to the Center for 15 years of service!**



On tour in DC during the shutdown



Photo by Chad Blair/Civil Beat

Earlier this month, 75 students from **Mililani Middle School** toured Washington, DC. When they planned their trip, they had no way of knowing their opportunities to see and learn would be limited by the government shutdown. But they did have some good fortune with their tour of the Capitol Building – their personal tour guide was none other than **Hawaii's U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono**. (My granddaughter Kylie is 4th from Senator Hirono's left.) They also met Senator Brian Schatz as well as Congresswomen Tulsi Gabbard and Colleen Hanabusa.

News item . . .

It's always gratifying to see our Legislative work move from concept to reality. I received word a couple of weeks ago that a contract has been issued for a \$98,000 project at **Mililani Waena Elementary School** to help ventilate school classrooms there. The project involves new roofing materials, installation of solar roof vents and carpentry repairs.

Mililani Homecoming 2013



Cheerleaders, the Trojan mascot and the MHS football team ~ heading toward a 44-14 victory over Leilehua and a first round bye in the Red Division playoffs. >>>>



It's always an honor to be invited to ride in the Mililani High School Homecoming Parade through the streets of our town.

We celebrate Trojan Pride!



Construction nearing completion on affordable senior housing in downtown Honolulu - - applications now available

Applications are now being accepted for 1 and 2 bedroom rental apartments in a new high rise complex at 888 Iwilei Road near downtown Honolulu. Occupancy of the 159 units is expected to begin in January 2014.

The Senior Residence at Iwilei - built with \$26 million in state support - features a secured building for seniors who meet income eligibility requirements, at a site along city bus routes with shopping centers nearby. Laundry rooms and recreational space are among the included amenities.

I was pleased to support this project through the state's Capital Improvements Project process, and look forward to the official dedication and grand opening of this wonderful addition to our state public housing inventory.

More photos and information about *Senior Residence at Iwilei*

www.mschawaii.com

Applications due no later than November 22, 2013



News items . . .

◆ This Saturday, October 26, at the Filipino Community Center in Waipahu, AARP will offer ***Take Charge of Your Money***, a free educational workshop for people of all ages at which participants can learn how to save for the future through budgeting, savings, and getting out of debt - great information and advice on managing your income and expenses. Call toll free at 1-800-926-8300 to sign up.

◆ The state is opening four new **Immigrant Resource Centers** - two of them here on Oahu. The centers will serve as a link between immigrants and available services from both public and private social services agencies. On Oahu, the centers are at Parents and Children Together (PACT) offices at Kuhio Park Terrace, 1485 Linapuni Street in Kalihi, and at Child and Family Service Center, 91-1841 Fort Weaver Road in Ewa Beach. Other offices are located in Hilo and Lihue. If you know someone who might benefit from such services, let them know about these new resources.

More information at 586-8675.

Success story! Unclaimed property filing pays off . . .

From time to time over the years I have written to residents in my district to remind them about the State's Unclaimed Property Branch. That's the agency that takes custody of such things as long forgotten or abandoned bank accounts or safe deposit boxes, unclaimed or lost paychecks, insurance deposits and so forth.

A few weeks ago, a resident called my Capitol office, excited and very happy about receiving a check from the state for \$315 after doing the paperwork and filing a claim for an account she had forgotten about.

It's easy to search their files to find out if YOU may have money coming. Check on the Web at

www.unclaimedproperty.hawaii.gov

Hawaii Five-0 premieres season four

The Senate this year has recognized that the presence of Hawaii Five-0 here brings untold benefits to the state. Aside from the direct expenditures for production, the show provides job opportunities for 300 to 400 people at all levels of expertise, including University of Hawaii interns who learn the business of television production first hand. Five-0 shares the spectacular beauty and unique culture of our state with viewers, enticing them to visit and experience everything the islands have to offer for themselves. On-location crews have become a welcome presence in our communities, and we welcome them as good neighbors.

Hawaii Five-0 stars and CBS executives welcomed crowds to the big screen premiere of the show's fourth season in Waikiki. Above, **Hawaii Lieutenant Governor Shan Tsutsumi** and I joined lead actor **Alex O'Loughlin** for a photo.

During the opening ceremony I was pleased to present a Senate congratulatory certificate of appreciation to senior producers. Rep. Mark Takai joined me on stage to represent the Legislature.

