
HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE STATE TO PROTECT THE TRADITIONAL HAWAIIAN TARO VARIETIES AND THE FAMOUS TARO GROWING AREAS (WET AND DRY) OF THE STATE AS UNIQUE AND CHERISHED RESOURCES CONTRIBUTING TO THE SPECIAL IDENTITY AND WELL-BEING OF HAWAI'I.

1 WHEREAS, in the Kumulipo, the Hawaiian creation chant,
2 Häloa-naka, Häloa-lau-kapalili (the trembling stalk), the taro
3 plant, and Häloa, the child, are born of the same parents, Wakea
4 and Ho'ohökūkalani, and Hawaiian people cherish this sacred
5 relationship with kalo (taro); and
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7 WHEREAS, taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) has been a plant of
8 central importance to the survival of the Hawaiian people since
9 their arrival to these islands an estimated 1,200 years ago; and
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11 WHEREAS, the famed and historic kalo-growing areas and
12 historic cropping systems, wet and dry, throughout the Hawaiian
13 Islands represent 1,200 years of unparalleled engineering skills
14 and continuous taro cultivation that preserves the lifestyle and
15 beauty of these unique landscapes for residents and millions of
16 tourists annually; and
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18 WHEREAS, the fallow and working lo'i (taro patches) in
19 Hawai'i also serve as habitats for the state's endemic and
20 endangered waterbirds and other fauna; and
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22 WHEREAS, poi, kalo, and lü'au (taro leaf) in local diets
23 are conclusively recognized by physicians as having positive
24 effects on Hawaiian health, and growing kalo contributes to the
25 health and well-being of the native Hawaiian community and all
26 of us today; and
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28 WHEREAS, the availability of lo'i kalo provides a healthy,
29 low-cost food choice to low-income families to reduce their
30 monthly cost of food by more than fifty percent; and



1 WHEREAS, kalo has provided the people of Hawai'i with food
2 and livelihood, contributed to all forms of education from pre-
3 school through graduate school, from the arts and culture to the
4 sciences, and provided inspiration to hundreds of artists and
5 cultural practitioners throughout the generations; and
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7 WHEREAS, taro farmers generously contribute daily and
8 annually to all manner of family and community events, and
9 enhance the economic abundance and vibrancy of the state; and
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11 WHEREAS, kalo and lo'i kalo are a source of art, research,
12 jobs, value-added products, product-imaging, tourism, and the
13 tourist experience in Hawai'i, and a part of the face of Hawai'i
14 to the world; and
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16 WHEREAS, no other region in the Pacific can surpass Hawaii
17 in its degree of refinement in growing kalo; and
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19 WHEREAS, at one time, Hawaiians developed three hundred to
20 four hundred varieties of kalo, many specific to particular
21 climates, soils, and elevations, each with its own unique
22 characteristics of color, shape, hardness, fragrance, and
23 flavor, but in 1934, only sixty-nine known Hawaiian varieties of
24 kalo were documented by Bulletin 84; and
25

26 WHEREAS, little is known or documented of the diverse,
27 traditional cropping system designs, production methods, and
28 varieties, that are the very things that define Hawaii's
29 uniqueness in the Pacific; and
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31 WHEREAS, the original Hawaiian kalo variety collections set
32 aside to preserve this unique heritage from the 1930's to the
33 present are incomplete and in need of recovery, with many of the
34 varieties at risk of disappearing completely because their
35 population numbers fewer than the population of most state and
36 federally listed threatened and endangered species in the state;
37 and
38

39 WHEREAS, while this agricultural crop is the most
40 significant cultural crop in the state, it represented barely
41 one percent of all agricultural lands in production in Hawai'i
42 in 2005; and



1 WHEREAS, taro farms are rapidly disappearing with only an
2 estimated five hundred acres remaining out of many thousands of
3 acres of agricultural lands in the state, as of 2006; and
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5 WHEREAS, there are many threats to the continuation of kalo
6 cultivation, including: crop diseases; invasive apple snail
7 (*Pomacea canaliculata*), which accounted for up to twenty-five
8 percent of crop loss and fifty percent of labor cost increases
9 for kalo farmers in 2005; destruction of several major
10 traditional Hawaiian kalo variety collections by feral pigs in
11 the last few years; the rising cost of living, land values,
12 leases, and taxes; all of which threaten to put kalo, a
13 potentially multi-million dollar industry with a multitude of
14 indirect benefits, out of business within the next five years
15 and make kalo-farming become an endangered way of life; and
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17 WHEREAS, if the State is to retain as much of what makes
18 Hawai'i unique as possible before it is lost, and before
19 additional conservation and other intervention measures are
20 considered, the importance of the ancient Hawaiian taro
21 varieties and the famous taro-growing areas of the islands
22 should be recognized as unique and in need of protection; now,
23 therefore,
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25 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
26 Twenty-fourth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular
27 Session of 2007, that the State of Hawai'i recognizes that taro
28 is an important agricultural, cultural, and economic crop
29 essential to both our heritage and our future; and
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31 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the State of Hawai'i recognizes
32 the Hawaiian taro varieties and the famous taro-growing areas of
33 the islands, wet and dry, as unique, cherished resources in
34 danger of extinction and in need of conservation, by supporting
35 policy, laws, rules, and actions that provide for their
36 protection; and



1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
2 Resolution be transmitted to the Governor; Chairperson of the
3 Board of Land and Natural Resources; Chairperson of the Board of
4 Agriculture; Director of Business, Economic Development, and
5 Tourism; Executive Director of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority;
6 Director of Health; and the Mayors of the respective counties.
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OFFERED BY:



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