

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

1569

Honolulu, Hawaii

March 29, 2007

RE: H.R. No. 249

H.D. 1

Honorable Calvin K.Y. Say
Speaker, House of Representatives
Twenty-Fourth State Legislature
Regular Session of 2007
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on International Affairs, to which was referred H.R. No. 249 entitled:

"HOUSE RESOLUTION APPROVING AND AUTHORIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF STATE-PROVINCE RELATIONS OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE STATE OF HAWAII OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE PROVINCE OF THUA THIEN-HUE OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this resolution is to approve and authorize the establishment of state-provincial relations of friendship between the State of Hawaii and the Province of Thua Thien-Hue of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Pacific Management Resources, Group 70 International, TAF International, Vietnamese American Chamber of Commerce, and numerous individuals submitted testimony in support of this measure. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism supported the intent of this measure. Numerous individuals opposed this measure.

Your Committee notes that numerous individuals submitted testimony and comments, sharing many different viewpoints. Those in favor of the resolution cited several reasons, including, among others:

- (1) The City & County of Honolulu has established a sister city relationship with the City of Hue, which is the

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capital of Thua Thien-Hue Province, one of Vietnam's five largest cities, and the richest in cultural sites and heritage;

- (2) Hawaii and Hue share the rich cultural heritage of being home to a monarch;
- (3) Hawaii will be the only U.S. state to have an affiliation with Hue City and Province;
- (4) The Travel Industry Management School, College of Business Administration, and Law School of the University of Hawaii have already established exchanges and working relationships with universities in Vietnam; and
- (5) Relations between Hawaii and Hue offers the potential of opportunity for cultural and educational relationships and exchanges that would provide a rich context for economic interdependence.

Individuals opposing this measure expressed dismay at the offer of extending formal relations between Hawaii and Vietnam for a number of reasons, including:

- (1) Concerns that Communist officials commit daily abuses to religious and political leaders, and authorities in Thua Thien-Hue continue to arrest and detain citizens;
- (2) Concerns that tourism exchange may not be economically feasible for the average Vietnamese citizen, whose wages are comparatively small, with fifty percent of the population below the poverty line;
- (3) Concerns that the Vietnamese Government currently participates in the sex trade and trafficking of women, through the use of passport control; and
- (4) Concerns that while this resolution is offered in the spirit of internationalism and goodwill, conversely, political corruption is present within the Vietnamese Government, and concessions to a Communist regime may result in emboldened abuses.

Upon consideration of the numerous comments and testimonies offered, your Committee has made the following amendments to this measure:

- (1) Changing the title of this resolution to read:
"ENCOURAGING THE PROLIFERATION OF DEMOCRACY, PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC OPENNESS IN VIETNAM BY MEANS OF A SISTER-PROVINCE AFFILIATION WITH THE PROVINCE OF THUA THIEN-HUA IN VIETNAM";
- (2) Adding language to emphasize that the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union on December 26, 1991 has greatly delegitimized the existence of Communist regimes in the 21st century, and change is needed in states such as Vietnam;
- (3) Making references to scholarly research and historical examples indicating positive benefits of economic interdependence;
- (4) Clarifying that the Legislature seeks diplomatic and economic engagement as a device to bring about and facilitate democratic transition and a continuum of human rights and economic freedom in Vietnam; and
- (5) Making other technical, nonsubstantive amendments for clarity, consistency, and style.

Your Committee wishes to reaffirm its sensitivity to concerns about human rights abuses, corruption, and political oppression abroad, and emphasizes that this resolution was passed in the spirit of goodwill and international diplomacy.

Your Committee further wishes to note that calls for interaction and sister-province affiliation with Vietnam began with the vision and original leadership of the former Representative of the 4th District, Representative Helene Hale, and your Committee has passed this measure to continue her call for peaceful engagement.

Your Committee expresses its strong desire to facilitate forgiveness, political reconciliation, cooperation, and collaboration between Vietnam and the United States, given the legacy of the Vietnam War, that swords might be turned into plowshares through a sister-state affiliation, for as the late

President Ronald Reagan noted before the 42nd session of the United Nations General Assembly, "Cannot swords be turned into plowshares? Can we and all nations not live in peace? In our obsession with antagonisms of the moment, we often forget how much unites all the members of humanity. Perhaps we need some outside, universal threat to make us recognize this common bond. I occasionally think how quickly our differences worldwide would vanish if we were facing an alien threat from outside this world. And yet, I ask you, is not an alien force already among us? What could be more alien to the universal aspirations of our peoples than war and the threat of war?"

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on International Affairs that is attached to this report, your Committee concurs with the intent and purpose of H.R. No. 249, as amended herein, and recommends that it be referred to the Committee on Tourism & Culture in the form attached hereto as H.R. No. 249, H.D. 1.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on International
Affairs,



RIDA T.R. CABANILLA, Chair

