

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

2385

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 15 2008

RE: S.B. No. 2915  
S.D. 1

Honorable Colleen Hanabusa  
President of the Senate  
Twenty-Fourth State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2008  
State of Hawaii

Madam:

Your Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs, to which was referred S.B. No. 2915 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO TARO,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to create the Taro Security and Purity Task Force within the Department of Agriculture and to appropriate funds for that purpose.

Testimony in support of this measure was submitted by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Hawaii Crop Improvement Association, and four individuals. The Department of Agriculture submitted comments.

Your Committee recognizes the need to develop non-genetic modification based solutions to protect taro from disease and insects on a statewide basis. In Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 206 (2007), the Legislature requested that the Department of Agriculture develop a Taro Security and Purity Research Program that is designed to ensure that taro can be saved and protected from natural attack.

In 2007, 1.8 million pounds of taro were imported to Hawai'i. Under current biosecurity rules, the Department of Agriculture was unable to inspect much of these imports for threats to existing taro crops in the State.



At the same time, taro farmers are struggling with high rates of pests and disease infestation, rising crop and land costs, lack of access to quality water and land resources, declines in crop cultivar biodiversity, and a decrease in the number of families able to continue the taro farming lifestyle. Taro and taro farms are a visual image that is critical to Hawaii's economic vitality in agriculture, tourism, health and wellness, and education and the arts. Taro and taro farms help to sell Hawai'i to the world.

The Department of Agriculture was tasked under Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 206 (2007) to collaborate with taro growers and various Native Hawaiian groups to develop and adopt a program that would:

- (1) Allow the Department of Agriculture's biosecurity program to protect crops in Hawai'i by inspecting foreign crops upon entrance to the State, and preventing any viruses or insects from entering the State;
- (2) Allow alternative forms of research on taro other than genetic modification;
- (3) Provide public outreach, engagement, and education on taro research and protection; and
- (4) Request the United States Department of Agriculture to have the Alomae/Bobone virus disease complex and taro beetles designated as "actionable pests" in the findings of the United States Department of Agriculture and the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture report to prevent entry into Hawai'i from foreign countries.

The Department of Agriculture initiated a dialogue with taro farmers from each island, researchers and representatives from the University of Hawai'i, the Hawai'i Farm Bureau, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. From that dialogue a joint report was drafted describing the outcomes and recommendations of the participants. The joint report included proposed legislation and was developed and forwarded to the Legislature.

One of the primary recommendations of that report was to form a Taro Security and Purity Task Force in order to guide policy and prioritize research for the protection of taro in Hawai'i.



To ensure that such a task force would have the full participation of taro farmers throughout the State, who have faced crop hardships for many years without financial assistance and whose resources are limited, the participants recommended that the task force be funded under a legislative appropriation for fiscal year 2009.

Your Committee has amended this measure by clarifying that the itemized appropriation made pursuant to section 8(1) of this measure be for the purpose of convening and implementing the task force.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2915, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 2915, S.D. 1, and be referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on  
behalf of the members of the  
Committee on Agriculture and  
Hawaiian Affairs,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
JILL TOKUDA, Chair



The Senate  
Twenty-Fourth Legislature  
State of Hawaii

**Record of Votes**  
**Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs**  
**AHW**

Bill / Resolution No.:* <b>SB 2915</b>	Committee Referral: <b>AHW, WAM</b>	Date: <b>12 Feb 2008</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> The committee is reconsidering its previous decision on this measure. If so, then the previous decision was to: _____				
The Recommendation is: <input type="checkbox"/> Pass, unamended 2312 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pass, with amendments 2311 <input type="checkbox"/> Hold 2310 <input type="checkbox"/> Recommit 2313				
Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
TOKUDA, Jill N. (C)	✓			
ENGLISH, J. Kalani (VC)	✓			
GABBARD, Mike	✓			
HEE, Clayton				✓
KOKUBUN, Russell S.				✓
SLOM, Sam	✓			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
Recommendation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted				
Chair's or Designee's Signature: <i>J. Kalani English</i>				
<b>Distribution:</b> Original    Yellow    Pink    Goldenrod File with Committee Report    Clerk's Office    Drafting Agency    Committee File Copy				

\*Only one measure per Record of Votes