

Senator Fred Hemmings
Opening Day Speech
January 16, 2008

Governor Lingle, Leaders of the Executive Branch, Chief Justice Moon, Members of the State Judiciary, Madame President, Leaders of our Military in the Pacific, Distinguished Guests, Family and People of Hawaii;

Republicans are prepared and eager to work constructively with the Majority party.

We challenge the status quo by seeking to solve the big problems facing us now rather than pursuing business as usual. The obstacles we face cannot be overcome by legislation alone. There is a need for bipartisanship, cooperation with the executive branch of government, more public and private partnerships and making the people's government efficient by setting realistic priorities.

Our state and the world for that matter are at an unprecedented juncture in history. Many of the principles humankind has lived by since the dawn of civilization may no longer be practical. Evidence of a global meltdown should be troubling.

Headlines like these validate my concerns:

- Massive ocean dead zone
- Atop Mauna Loa, soaring carbon-dioxide levels show human imprint
- Coral reefs heading for doom
- 114 of 394 primate species court extinction

A recent photo in the newspaper says a thousand words as it depicts standing room only at Waikiki Beach.

We must heed the warnings of the collapse of past societies as today's global community is so interconnected. The world has indeed become a very small place. Hawaii's treasures are especially finite. Demands on our resources are becoming increasingly strained. Competition for water, energy and land grows and grows. Our ability to safely dispose of our own waste has become stunted by misplaced political priorities. I know we can realize a future where growth in these beautiful islands has been stabilized, where transportation gridlock has become alleviated, where energy independence is real, and where Hawaii's natural beauty is protected and nourished. I think we all share dreams of a sustainable future.

Several hundred years ago on Rapanui, another Pacific island, they cut down their last tree which triggered the demise of their culture. What were they thinking? Here in Hawaii we still measure economic success by construction starts, increased visitor arrivals, and exponential growth. From time in memorial, growth has been a hallmark for success and prosperity. We cannot wait until 2050 to achieve sustainability. With the partnership of private enterprise and good public policy, we should now work to

institute preferred growth, economic equilibrium and a steady state economy. No doubt we could probably sustain a future if we paved over Oahu and became like Manhattan. What are we thinking? Some proposals have already been advanced to stabilize Hawaii's biggest industry and have languished. I ask again, what is the carrying capacity of tourism? 7 million plus as we currently have now? 10, 15, 20 million? Do we build visitor accommodations in our neighborhoods, like the North Shore, at the expense of our lifestyle? I think not. If we are to achieve a steady state economy with selected growth and measured consumption of our most valuable resource—land—we need action now. We all must rethink how we operate and make small adjustments in addition to expediting the big changes such as making fossil fuels obsolete within ten years. The Senate's paper reduction efforts are to be lauded. Governor Lingle must be applauded for her commitment to renewable energy by expediting the development of photovoltaic systems for 12 public buildings. Speaking of the Governor, she should be our biggest ally. We must not let petty politics deter us from working constructively with the executive branch of government.

Many of the challenges in Hawaii are not going to be solved by passing a new law or throwing more money at problems such as the systemic failure of our education system. Several years ago a provocative woman suggested to me that the best legislators are the ones that get the job done by introducing the least number of bills.

Senate Republicans, though small in number, do represent the hopes and aspiration of the people of Hawaii that feel more of the same from the legislature is not good enough. We are not going to surrender. We are not going to acquiesce and change parties for our own convenience. Hawaii deserves the best from each one of us.

We are proud of who we are. We stand undaunted in the face of the Goliath you are. We believe our \$2.4 billion public education system should...educate. Our economy should reward hard work and not tax excessively—especially the working poor. Our laws should protect citizens from crime and victims should have priority over criminals. We acknowledge that the rights of all humans are ordained by a higher power not by government. These are some of the values that represent the very soul of who we are as Republicans. These principles that are our bond are relevant now more than ever.

As we begin this legislative session, the best future we can imagine or dream of can become a reality. In this quest we must choose wisely. Let's begin now.

Aloha.