



March 4, 2008

Contact: Michele Van Hessen
House Minority Research: 586-7033
Direct: 586-7041 Cell: 227-4332
E-mail: vanhessen@capitol.hawaii.gov

Press Release

House Minority - Our View

"Being Homeless Is An Emergency" Says Representative Thielen

On the chamber floor, Representative Kymberly Pine rose in opposition to House Bill 2664. "This measure handcuffs the Governor's ability to act in the best interest of Hawaii in the case of an emergency," said Representative Pine.

"The Governor has actually taken power away from the legislature in the example of declaring an emergency regarding homelessness not once but twice in the pass year," said Democratic Leader Representative Kirk Caldwell. He continued, "What made homelessness an emergency?"

"This bill would turn the clock on emergency management law in Hawaii back fifty seven years and significantly hamper the governor's ability to respond to emergencies and disasters," stated Attorney General Mark J. Bennett in his testimony to the House Committee on finance. He continued:

Sections 127-1 to 127-9, Hawaii Revised Statutes, have been suspended since 1951 and for the last fifty-seven years, virtually all of the Governor's emergency management powers and capabilities have been found primarily in chapter 128, Hawaii Revised Statutes. This bill effectively terminates the suspensions, leaves the Governor with two very separate and distinct chapters for emergency management, and dangerously hampers the governor's ability to respond to emergencies and disasters.

"This bill is design in part to contain the abuse that we have seen in the past year of the Governor's misuse of emergency powers on the issue of emergency powers on the issue of homelessness," said Representative Caldwell. "And that is why I'm talking about homelessness," continued Caldwell.

"I am personally offended by comments that says homelessness is not an emergency, that speaker has a roof over his head, a very nice roof up in Manoa, said Representative Cynthia Thielen, in response to Rep. Caldwell's remarks. She continued,

"There were people out there on the street there were people that were evicted by the Mayor out of the city park. The Governor stepped forward and gave those people a temporary shelter calling it the 'Next Step' so they didn't feel so degraded by the experience of being homeless without any place to go. I've been down to the 'Next Step' a number of times. I saw the people that came out and volunteered to set that up so

the people would have a place to stay so children wouldn't be out there without any shelter what so ever. I saw the people that really cared that stepped forward in this emergency. Being homeless is an emergency. That is the most heartless comment I have ever heard in this chamber that homelessness is not an emergency."

"Homelessness is an emergency and we have a Governor that recognized that and stepped forward," Representative Thielen said.

House Bill 2664, introduced by the Democratic Speaker of the House Representative Calvin Say, impairs the State's ability to provide immediate assistance when it is necessary and warranted by requiring the Governor to call the Legislature into session to declare an emergency. Rather than using proactive emergency management procedures that emphasize loss prevention, this measure would turn disaster prevention principles on its head because if there was an hurricane emergency most likely the Representative would not be able to leave report for a special session. It is absurd to place the State in a reactive position in disasters and emergencies.