

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

Testimony Memorandum

To: Rep. Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn B. Lee, Vice Chair
Members of the Finance Committee

From: Representative Gene Ward

Subject: Testimony in support of HB1975, Relating to International Affairs

Date: February 21, 2008

As a member of the International Affairs Committee and a proponent of strengthening Hawaii's tie to Asia, I strongly support HB1975.

Hawaii is the perfect location to be the launching pad to Asia, making a Legislative protocol fund for international affairs essential. Our close cultural ties with Asian countries give us the opportunity as well as the responsibility of extending our Aloha to visiting dignitaries.

As a minor housekeeping measure, may I suggest an amendment: the word "welcome," should be omitted from line (c). Protocol courtesies already imply the welcoming of visitors.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify in support of this very important measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gene Ward", written over a horizontal line.

Representative Gene Ward

Daniel P. de Gracia, II, MA
Concerned Citizen / Political Scientist

Offering Testimony In Support Of:
HB ~~1971~~ HD1 Relating to International Affairs (HSCR 201-08)

¹⁴⁷⁵
Before The:
House Committee On Finance
Friday, February 22, 2008 10:00 AM
Conference Room 309

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, Honorable Members, et al:

The purpose of this measure is to establish a legislative protocol fund to welcome and extend diplomatic courtesies to visiting distinguished visitors (DVs) and heads of state.

I strongly support this measure on the basis that Hawaii's geographic position makes it America's frontline state for international diplomacy and engagement. Thinking strategically towards the future, Hawaii has the opportunity to serve as a location to host diplomatic summits, international economic meetings, and even serve as a neutral location for other countries to hold negotiations. To accomplish this, it is extremely necessary for a protocol fund to exist to support interaction between our local government and those governments which choose to engage Hawaii.

Critics of the protocol fund have often derided it as nothing more than a "padded expense account" or a "legislative slush fund" but nothing could be farther from the truth. This fund's purpose is to allow Hawaii to engage our international community on a level that is commensurate with the long held international tradition of receiving dignitaries and heads of state in a hospitable and dignified manner.

I would be very impressed if Hawaii were to be the site of a future G-8 summit, or if, in the future, Hawaii was the site of the signing of a major arms control treaty or peace treaty. I believe that establishing this legislative protocol fund is the first step towards realizing that dream, and I strongly urge the members of the House Committee on Finance to pass this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.