

TESTIMONY BY DAVID SHIMABUKURO
ADMINISTRATOR, EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
STATE OF HAWAII
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & MILITARY AFFAIRS
AND
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 2849

FEBRUARY 14, 2008

RELATING TO ALLOWANCE ON SERVICE RETIREMENT

Chairs Evans and Sonson and Members of the Committees:

The ERS Board of Trustees opposes H.B. 2849 which allows Noncontributory Plan (class C) and Contributory Plan (class A) police radio dispatchers to retire with 25 years of service, regardless of age. Their benefit formula will increase from 1-1/4% or 2% to 2-1/2% for each year of credited service. This Bill also has an amendment which exempts this measure from the prohibition against benefit enhancements under Section 88-122(e), HRS.

Under this measure, current police radio dispatchers will also be given the opportunity to secure the same benefits as police officers, firefighters and other public safety officers in the Contributory Plan or be allowed to maintain their current membership status. All future hires will be enrolled in the Contributory Plan.

The ERS tax attorney informed us that allowing members to have a choice to join the Contributory Plan for police officers, firefighters and other public safety officers is no longer permissible under the Internal Revenue Code and could jeopardize our tax-exempt status.

However, if the Legislature wishes to allow police radio dispatchers to have the same retirement benefits as police officers and other public safety employees, it must require all Contributory Plan, Noncontributory Plan and Hybrid Plan police radio dispatchers to transfer to the Contributory Plan for police officers and other public safety employees. Switching to different retirement plans can no longer be an elective right.

This Bill will also afford members with an enhanced retirement benefit which will increase the county governments' contributions to the ERS and increase the ERS' \$5.1 billion

unfunded liability. This is contrary to the provisions of Act 256, Session Laws of Hawaii 2007, which placed a moratorium on benefit enhancements until January 2, 2011.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this Bill.

WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY BY GEORGINA K. KAWAMURA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
STATE OF HAWAII
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
AND LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 2849

February 14, 2008

RELATING TO ALLOWANCE ON SERVICE RETIREMENT

House Bill No. 2849 adds police radio dispatchers to the category of public safety oriented positions receiving higher retirement benefits. Essentially, the bill increases the retirement benefit for police radio dispatchers from 2 percent to 2½ percent of the average final compensation, for each year of credited service. Employee contributions will increase from 7.8 percent to 12.2 percent. Combined with social security, approximately 19 percent of the member's salary will be devoted to retirement benefits. Currently, firefighters; police officers; corrections officers; investigators for the Departments of the Prosecuting Attorney, the Attorney General, and Public Safety narcotics enforcement and investigations staff; and water safety officers may retire with 25 years of service, the retirement benefit is 2½ percent of their average monthly compensation, with no benefit reduction for age. The maximum retirement allowance is not to exceed 80 percent.

We are opposed to this bill. The Employees' Retirement System's unfunded liability remains at \$5.1 billion. Exempting the provisions of this bill from Act 256, SLH 2007, which prohibits benefits enhancements for any group of members for the period January 2, 2008 until January 2, 2011, will increase costs to employers and increase the unfunded liability.



SHOPO

STATE OF HAWAII ORGANIZATION OF POLICE OFFICERS

"A Police Organization for Police Officers Only"

February 13, 2008

Representative Cindy Evans, Chair
Representative Sharon Har, Vice Chair

Representative Alex Sonson, Chair
Representative Bob Nakasone, Vice-Chair

Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
Committee on Labor and Public Employment

DATE: Thursday February 14, 2008
TIME: 9:15 am.
PLACE: Conference Room 309
State Capitol

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2849 RELATING TO EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM; POLICE RADIO DISPATCHERS

Chairman and Members of this Joint Committee:

My name is Tenari Ma'afala and I am the President of The State of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers ("SHOPO"). We represents over 2700 police officers in the State of Hawaii. SHOPO support HB 2849 relating to allowance on service retirement for police radio dispatcher class A members. This measure makes police radio dispatchers class A members of the employees' retirement system. Exempts Act from prohibition against benefit enhancements, including reduction in retirement age when there is an unfunded liability established in section 88-122(e), HRS by Act 256, SLH 2007, section 3(2).

This measure will provide Police Radio Dispatchers with similar retirement benefits that are afforded to police officers. Part of police work includes working with a very unique team which our police radio dispatchers are an integral part of. They deal with the same criminal elements and life threatening situations that we do on a daily basis. Their jobs are intense and can be heroic at times. SHOPO supports our Radio Dispatchers and this measure.

SHOPO supports the passage of HB 2849.

Honorable Cindy Evans, Chair
and Members
Committee on Public Safety and
Military Affairs
House of Representatives
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Evans and Members:

In lieu of testifying, on February 14, 2008 hearing on HB2849, I submit the following testimony. I have been employed as a Police Radio Dispatcher II of the Communications Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu for four years. **I strongly support House Bill No. 2849, Relating to Allowance on Service Retirement.**

This bill would allow me to be in the same category, Class A, as law enforcement officers in the ERS. I would be allowed to retire after 25 years of service without a penalty for my age if under 55 years old.

I am 40 years old and ideally to work here at dispatch for 30 years puts me way past a typical retirement age. I am not sure it would be wise to have a 70 year old in charge of public and officer safety. I want to be able to have the option to make a wise decision for my health and ability with 25 years of service and not forced to stay that last five years just because I am not eligible for retirement.

I urge you to pass this bill. Other states have passed similar measures for their dispatchers. I want to be able to do my best job for you when you call 9-1-1.

Sincerely,



Vernetta "Malia" Logsdon
91-201 Koanimakani Place
Kapolei, HI 96707

Honorable Cindy Evans, Chair and Members
Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
House of Representatives
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Evans and Members,

In lieu of testifying on February 14 2008, hearing on HB2849, I submit the following testimony. I have been employed as a Police Radio Dispatcher II of the Communications Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu for over six years. I strongly support House Bill no.2849, relating to Allowance on Service Retirement.

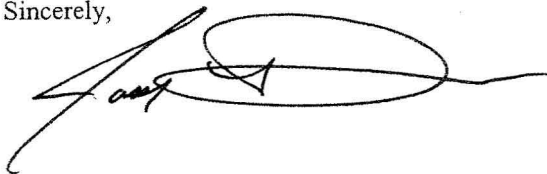
This bill would allow me to be in the same category, Class A, as law enforcement officers in the ERS. I would be allowed to retire after 25 years of service without penalty for my age if under 55 years old.

I enjoy working as a Police Radio Dispatcher. I truly love my job and find a sense of pride knowing that I can help people everyday. Over the years I have spoken to many other dispatchers across the country and we have compared notes on the benefits and drawbacks of this demanding career. On average the Dispatchers across the country have a higher salary and better retirement benefits than we do here in Honolulu. Not to mention almost all of them live in a city with a lower cost of living, which in turn will provide them with a better quality of life. They have a lighter workload, as they are only Dispatchers, and do not have to take calls from the public. They are offered adjusted workweek schedules so as to give them more time with their families. Not to many of the dispatchers I have talked to would give up their jobs to come do double the work for less pay and benefits.

While I myself have chosen this as my career and have chosen Hawaii as my home, I know we are losing quality people to the higher pay and better benefits that are provided by other departments. I strongly believe we need to start making changes to keep the excellent employees we already have here in Hawaii. I think it would also help in recruiting new employees into this demanding, and stressful profession.

I urge you to pass this bill. Other states have passed similar bills showing their commitment to keeping quality people in highly demanding jobs. When you call 911 do you want the best Hawaii as to offer? Or do you want whoever was left over?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jassy Doeblor', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Jassy Doeblor
94-1147 Mopua Lp
Waiaphu HI 9697

Honorable Cindy Evans, Chair
and Members
Committee on Public Safety and
Military Affairs
House of Representatives
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Evans and Members:

In lieu of testifying, on February 14, 2008 hearing on HB2849, I submit the following testimony. I have been employed as a Police Radio Dispatcher II of the Communications Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu for four years. I strongly support House Bill No. 2849, Relating to Allowance on Service Retirement.

This bill would allow me to be in the same category, Class A, as law enforcement officers in the ERS. I would be allowed to retire after 25 years of service without a penalty for my age if under 55 years old.

Although I enjoy working as a police radio dispatcher, this is a challenging, demanding, stressful job, and I feel that we are drastically underpaid for what we are asked to do. Entering us into the same category for retirement as an officer would show compensation and appreciation for the job we provide.

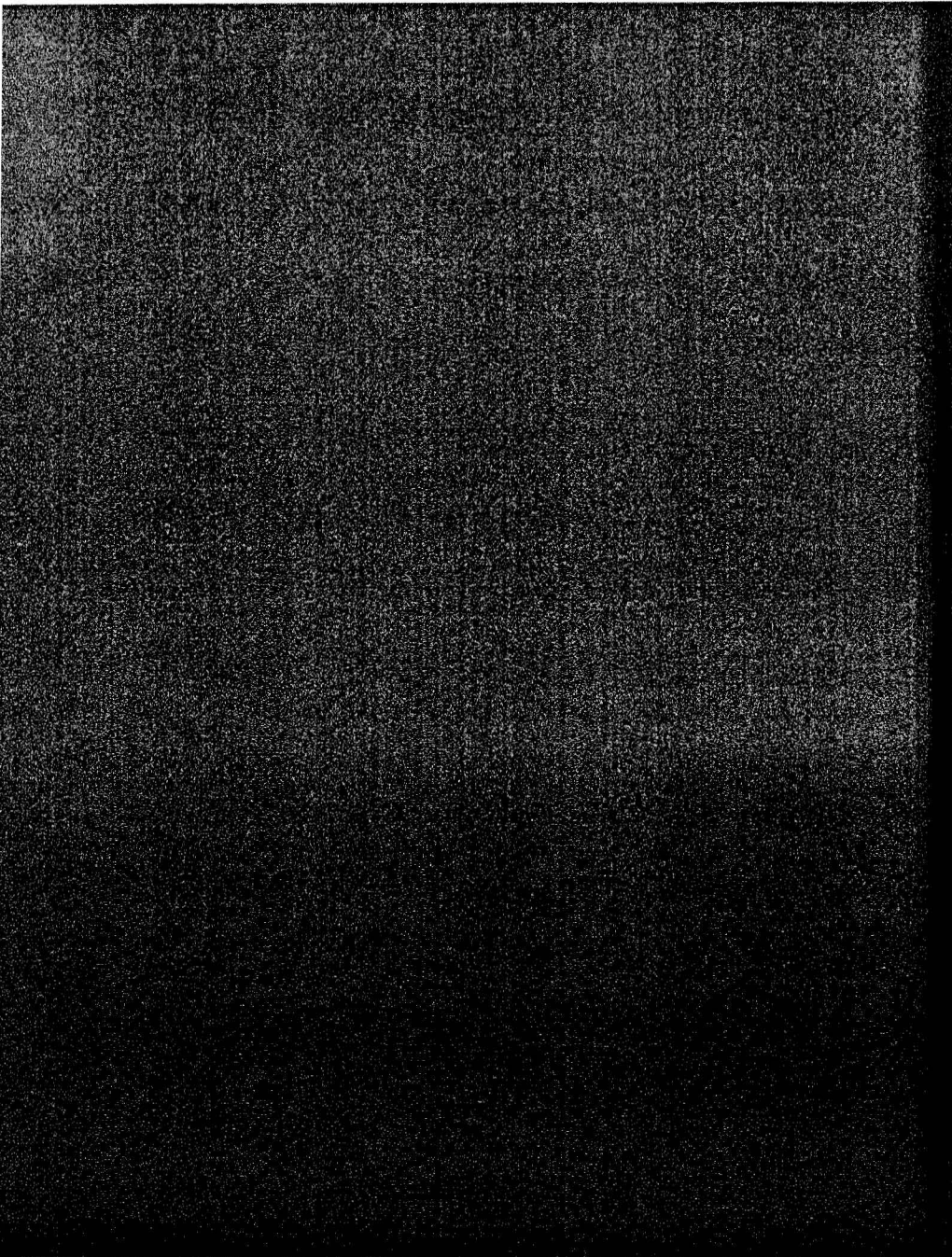
We have over a 50% turn-over rate for new hires. It is hard to keep them. What can motivate them to stay in this career field? One incentive is the ability to retire at 25 years of service without a penalty for age. This would be a major motivator. I am 35 years old and want this bill to pass for me, my peers and for all those dispatchers that will follow in this field.

I urge you to pass this bill. Other states have passed similar measures for their dispatchers. Hawaii needs to do this as a way of protecting public safety. You need me when you call 9-1-1.

Sincerely,



Shannon Simmons
1941 Church Lane #210
Honolulu, HI 96826



The Honorable Cindy Evans, Chair and Members
Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
House of Representatives
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Evans and Members:

My name is, Marietta Keala Vicens. Although I have only a year as a Supervising Police Radio Dispatcher, I will have 28 years with the Communications Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu. I strongly support House Bill No. 2849, Relating to Allowance on Service Retirement.


This bill would allow us to be in the same category, Class A, as law enforcement officers in the ERS. Although this bill would not benefit me, it would allow my fellow peers and employees to retire after 25 years of service without a penalty for their age if under 55 years old.

Being a high-level stress job, over the years I have seen the toll it takes. Yes, I could have gone elsewhere to make a living. I didn't just read a newspaper about someone dying as a result of a car accident or robbery, but actually took the call, dispatched the officer, called for the medical examiner or notified a family member to meet at a specific hospital.

This job takes a toll, not only on your body, but most significantly, your spirit and your mind. It's for these reasons that I believe an employee should be able to retire with dignity at 25 years of service, if, they choose. So, why stay, I enjoy my job, it's simple! Throughout my career I truly can't think of any other job that would give me more satisfaction.

Since I can't be in attendance, please add this to your committee as part of their testimony.

Sincerely,


Marietta Keala Vicens
1049 Uluopihl Loop
Kailua, HI 96734

Honorable Cindy Evans, Chair
and Members
Committee on Public Safety and
Military Affairs
House of Representatives
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Evans and Members:

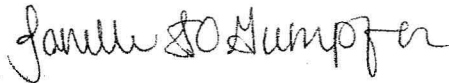
In lieu of testifying, on February 14, 2008 hearing on HB2849, I submit the following testimony. I have been employed as a Police Radio Dispatcher II of the Communications Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu for four years. **I strongly support House Bill No. 2849, Relating to Allowance on Service Retirement.**

This bill would allow me to be in the same category, Class A, as law enforcement officers in the ERS. I would be allowed to retire after 25 years of service without a penalty for my age if under 55 years old.

I am 27 years old and want to be able to retire after 25 years of service in appreciation for the stressful job that I do for public safety. I think that because technology is changing rapidly, that you will want to plan to have dispatchers work hard and get out, just like police officers. No one wants to see a 70 year old officer chasing a suspect down the street. You don't want to hear a 70 year old dispatcher answering calls and running the radios either.

I urge you to pass this bill. Other states have passed similar measures for their dispatchers. I want to be rewarded for my service to public safety because I treat people in crisis with respect and professionalism with every call to 9-1-1.

Sincerely,



Janelle "JJ" Gumpfer

The Honorable Cindy Evans, Chair and Members
Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
House of Representatives
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Evans and Members:

My name is Albert Battease and I am a Supervising Police Radio Dispatcher, assigned to the Communications Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu. I strongly support House Bill No. 2849, relating to Allowance on Service Retirement.

This bill would allow me to be in the same category, Class A, as law enforcement officers in the ERS. I would be allowed to retire after 25 years of service without a penalty for my age if under 55 years old.

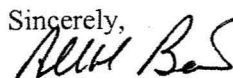
I was hired as a Police Radio Dispatcher (PRD) in December of 1995 after 15 years in the Army. I was promoted to Supervising Police Radio Dispatcher (SPRD) in April of 2002. While not every call is filled with emotion, I have experienced the stress and grind of taking call after call from irate and excited callers. These people deserve respect and professional service from the PRD who took their call to the Officer who deals with them face to face. I can also tell you that this is extremely difficult to do at times. I challenge anyone to try to maintain a professional attitude while taking a simple call such as a parking violation or barking dog complaint after handling a call from a child that is crying into the phone because daddy is beating on mommy or someone that has just witnessed a horrific accident. This is not easy to do and it will definitely take its toll.

As a supervisor I have handled numerous complaints about dispatchers attitudes and lack of professionalism. Sometimes these complaints are valid, but more times that not it is the public that have unrealistic expectations.

It is common knowledge that stress is a major contributing factor to health issues. I know of several dispatcher friends who have died while employed. While not the sole reason, stress is a major contributing factor in the onset of Adult Diabetes. This condition is prevalent among PRD's with at least 30% of our personnel being diabetic or borderline diabetic. I feel that I do a fairly good job of dealing with stress yet I fall into this category and have also suffered a heart attack since working this job. Yes, I definitely think that a 25-year retirement would benefit PRD's from a health standpoint.

Being in charge of the training program for newly hired personnel has given me a good insight into the importance of recruiting qualified personnel. I certainly believe that a 25-year retirement would be a positive incentive to attract quality candidates who would be successful at this job.

Sincerely,



Albert Battease

45-528 Pahia Rd.

Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744

Parrish, Nicole

To: repevans@Capitol.hawaii.gov
Subject: HB2849 Testimony

The Honorable Cindy Evans, Chair and Members
Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs
House of Representatives State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Evans and Members:

My name is Nicole Parrish and I am a Police Radio Dispatcher II of the Communications Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu and I am writing to you today because I strongly support House Bill No. 2849, Relating to Allowance on Service Retirement.

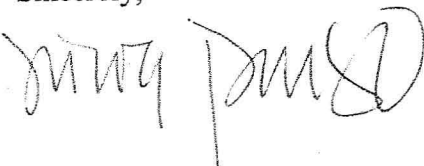
There are numerous reasons why this retirement option for Dispatchers would be beneficial. This bill would allow us to be in the same category, Class A, as law enforcement officers in the ERS and we would be allowed to retire after 25 years of service without a penalty for my age if under 55 years old.

As Dispatchers we are subjected to daily verbal abuse from the public via their calls for service, which directly leads to highly stressful mental & physical strains. Due to a lack of education by the public on HPD procedures, Hawaii State Laws, and basic misconceptions along with cultural differences, calls are filled with verbal abuse including but not limited to name calling, foul language, and threats. As Dispatchers, we unfortunately have no recourse for this type of abuse; sadly it is considered "part of the job."

After an eight or twelve hour work shift, being subjected to this work environment wears down on your mental and physical well-being. Studies have shown that people that work shift-type schedules are more likely to develop cancers and chronically suffer from other types of medical issues than those that do not. Diabetes, Heart Disease, High Blood Pressure, Insomnia, Carpal Tunnel, Migraine Headaches, Chronic body aches and pains are all associated to our working environment and conditions. Shortening our exposure to these working conditions would be a greatly accepted benefit.

The 25 year retirement program also leaves us the option of pursuing another career, should we choose, after we retire while we are still of a functioning age. With the advances in technology and the speed in which these advances are made, having a 25 year retirement turn-out will also aid in the turn over of appropriate personnel (age, training, functioning). Our current retirement plan is 30 years plus the age requirement of 55 years or age 62 with 10 years of service. For some of us that would mean we only be eligible to retire in the year 2036 and be of an unreasonable age of 58 years old. As harsh as this seems, being sharp in the mind, savvy in technology, and being able to make the correct judgement calls quickly are all affected by age. In our profession where seconds save lives, we cannot afford to be careless. The opportunity to participate in the 25 years retirement of service is an option that should be offered to Dispatchers.

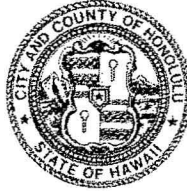
Sincerely,



POLICE DEPARTMENT
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

801 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET · HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 529-3111 · INTERNET: www.honolulu-pd.org

MUFI HÄNNEMANN
MAYOR



BOISSE P. CORREA
CHIEF

PAUL D. PUTZULU
MICHAEL D. TUCKER
DEPUTY CHIEFS

OUR REFERENCE KS-MC

February 14, 2008

The Honorable Cindy Evans, Chair
and Members
Committee on Public Safety and
Military Affairs
The Honorable Alex M. Sonson, Chair
and Members
Committee on Labor and Public Employment
House of Representatives
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chairs Evans and Sonson and Members:

I am Kenneth Simmons, Major of the Communications Division of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), City and County of Honolulu.

The HPD strongly supports House Bill No. 2849, Relating to Allowance on Service Retirement.

Police radio dispatchers (PRDs) face a difficult job day in and day out. The dispatchers are underpaid, stressed, and underappreciated. In addition, the HPD (like many other jurisdictions) has difficulty hiring, training, and retaining its dispatchers. Currently, there are 20 vacant positions, and the PRDs are often mandated to work beyond their normal shift. This overtime, whether voluntary or involuntary, creates an additional strain on the employees' health, making them vulnerable to diseases and illnesses. Major medical studies have also proven the connection between stressful jobs in law enforcement and shift work, the night shift in particular.

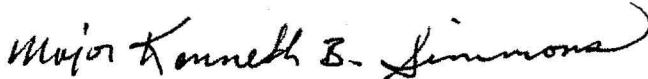
This bill offers the PRDs the ability to be accepted into the retirement class reserved for law enforcement officers in this state. It will allow them the opportunity to work for 25 years of credited service, unreduced for age, with an increased percentage of contributions to the Employees' Retirement System. Although we project that less than half of our current staff will afford themselves this opportunity, we believe that it is the necessary planning step to take. This will ensure that the HPD will be able to recruit and retain quality personnel who are able to adapt to our rapidly changing technology in order to fulfill the requirements of this live-saving occupation.

The Honorable Cindy Evans, Chair
and Members
The Honorable Alex M. Sonson, Chair
and Members
Page 2
February 14, 2008

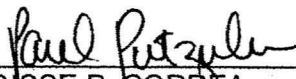
Our department's PRDs are committed to providing the best communications to deliver expeditious emergency services to every call. This inclusion will show our dispatchers and prospective dispatchers that we appreciate the sacrifice they make every day to keep our community safe.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to express our support for this bill.

Sincerely,


KENNETH SIMMONS, Major
Communications Division

APPROVED:


for: BOISSE P. CORREA
Chief of Police

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2008

RECEIVED

2008 FEB -6 P 2: 12

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & MILITARY AFFAIRS

Rep. Cindy Evans, Chair
Rep. Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair

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HOUSE OF
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Rep. Michael Y. Magaoay	Rep. Scott K. Saiki
Rep. Hermina M. Morita	Rep. Cynthia Thielen

NOTICE OF HEARING

DATE: Thursday February 14, 2008
TIME: 10:55a.m.
PLACE: Conference Room 309
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

A G E N D A

HB 2543

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR A SHOOTING
RANGE IN WEST HAWAII ON THE ISLAND OF HAWAII
Appropriates funds to plan, design, and construct a shooting
range in west Hawaii on the island of Hawaii.

PSM/WLH, FIN

DECISION MAKING TO FOLLOW

Persons wishing to offer comments should submit testimony at least 24 hours prior to the hearing with a transmittal cover indicating:

- Testifier's name with position/title and organization;
- The Committee the comments are directed to;
- The date and time of the hearing;
- Measure number; and
- The number of copies the Committee is requesting.

PSM-WLH 02-14-08

