

February 4, 2008

The Honorable Lorraine Inouye, Chair  
Committee on Intergovernmental and Military Affairs  
State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 201  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Inouye:

Subject: H.B. 2720 Relating to the State fire Council

My name is Winston Lum and I am a part time and only staff member of the State Fire Council (SFC).

As you are aware, the four County Fire Chiefs serve in the unfunded capacity as the State Fire Council and have done so for 28 ½ years since its establishment in 1979 when the Office of the State Fire Marshal, which was a fully funded State agency, was abolished.

The primary duties of the SFC are to:

- 1) recommend, review and submit to the governor a state fire code for adoption in the state;
- 2) serve as the focal point through which all applications to the federal government for federal grant assistance for fire related projects, such as fire fighting, emergency response to terrorism and hazardous materials training. Although not within the scope of the Hawaii Revised Statutes, the SFC is also responsible to administer and maintain the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) in the State of Hawaii. The NFIRS is a requirement of the federal government to qualify for federal monies; and,
- 3) serves as a member of the State Building Code Council which is responsible to maintain and update the family of codes known as the *Building Code of the State of Hawaii*.

Other related duties include administering the awarded federal grants, coordinating statewide training and data collection, advising and assisting the other county fire departments where appropriate, standardized procedures and forms relating to inspections such as the school inspection form, investigates fires, introduces and monitors legislative proposals, may also advise the governor and the legislature with respect to fire prevention and protection, life safety and any other functions or activities for which the various county fire departments are generally responsible.

After 14 years of working without staffing, the SFC finally adopted a new state fire code in 2002. In late 2002, as a result of a special fund from the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations I was brought on board to run the day to day activities of the SFC and serve as the resource for the new code.

I also am responsible with administering SFC federal grant awards and serve as a member of the State Building Code Council.

Since 2002 almost 1.1 million dollars in federal grants have been awarded to our states to provide training, equipment and classes to our fire fighters statewide.

The State Building Code Council is responsible to maintain and update the family of codes known as the *Building Code of the State of Hawaii*. The State Building Code law requires that as part of the family of state codes a new SFC be adopted within ~~three years~~ *eighteen months* of the publication of a new code.

Under the present situation, with the addition duties encumbered, it is impossible to comply with the law and I am having difficulty in fulfilling all of the other duties required.

What would enactment of this measure mean to me as a citizen? It would mean that the SFC would have sufficient personnel to fulfill its mission and responsibilities more effectively and would be able to initiate other activities that benefit the fire service and our community.

What does it mean to me personally if the SFC has full time staffing? Inasmuch as I am a contract retiree of the state of Hawaii it would mean that I would be out of a job, but more important is that the SFC will be able to function more efficiently.

Therefore, I ask your support of S.B. 2720, to provide the quality of fire protection that the citizens of our State deserve.

Should you have any questions, I may be contacted at (808) 343-1950.

Sincerely,



WINSTON LUM  
Administrative Assistant SFC

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