

TESTIMONY FOR COMMITTEE ON TOURISM AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
For Public Hearing on Thursday, April 10th, 1:00 P.M.

From: Dr. Monty Downs
E.R. Physican, Wilcox Hospital &
Co-Chair, Kauai Water Safety Task Force
160 Lani Alii Place
Kapaa, HI 96766
Phone # (808) 822-3695
E-mail: wmdowns2000@yahoo.com

Re: SCR 166 and SR 91

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen of this Committee:

I have been an ER Physican at Wilcox Hospital for over 35 years, and I've had the honor of working with, and sometimes successfully intervening with, people and families in crisis situations. I can report to you that nothing is more pitiful than seeing a family who has lost one or more members during their "dream vacation to Hawaii", leaving them to make their sad way back home with an urn on the airplane seat instead of a loved one. (More often than not, the father). The personal suffering is severe, and the reputation of our destination takes a hard hit as well.

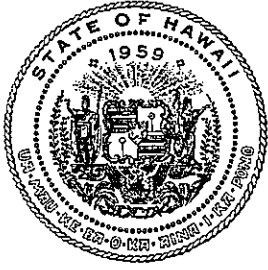
This occurs in our waters to the tune of over 3 dozen visitor drownings per year Statewide, and this has drawn me into being an "ocean safety advocate", which I have been for 20 years now. As such I have worked hard on getting more funding for more Lifeguards at more beaches, and in conjunction with this I've worked hard with many experts from various fields in developing educational/prevention strategies that might, just might, avert some of these tragedies. Web-sites, brochures, banners at baggage claim, ads in DriveGuides, a bi-weekly newspaper column, bookmarks to be inserted in Guide books, posting signs -- these are a few of the tools that we have put in place. We don't get the benefit of ever knowing who might not have drowned because of one or more of these tools, but if there are any, the work is well worth it.

I am therefore very excited about SCR 166/SR 91, which would legislate that visitors be provided with a water safety multi-lingual handout about water recreational hazards. At one time I myself lobbied to put a small message on the bottom of the Ag Declaration form, but I wasn't able to achieve that. At this point I don't know the exact mechanism by which SCR 166/SR 91 would be carried out. But I do know that Legislating that it be done would be a great step forward towards having another tool that might, just might, prevent a terrible tragedy. I look at our ocean safety challenge as a jigsaw puzzle, and each piece that we can put into place may lead us closer towards the beautiful picture of our travel-poster beaches with their sun and swaying palms.

I ask you to pass SCR 166/SR 91.

Sincerely Yours,

Dr. Monty Downs



Hawai'i Tourism Authority

Hawai'i Convention Center, 1801 Kalākaua Avenue, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96815
Website: www.hawaiitourismauthority.org

LINDA LINGLE
Governor

REX D. JOHNSON
President and Chief Executive Officer

Telephone: (808) 973-2255
Fax: (808) 973-2253

Testimony of
Rex Johnson

President and Chief Executive Officer
Hawai'i Tourism Authority

on

S.C.R. 166 and S.R. 91

Requesting the Hawaii Tourism Authority, in Cooperation and Conjunction with the Department of Health and Appropriate Water Safety Organizations, to Furnish Onboard a Visitor Water Safety Information Multi-lingual Handout to Provide Education on Water Recreational Hazards

Senate Committee on Tourism and Government Operations
Thursday, April 10, 2008
1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 229

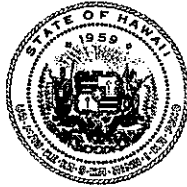
The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) is pleased to provide comments on S.C.R. 166 and S.R. 91, which request the HTA, with the Department of Health and water safety organizations to develop and furnish to passengers on flights in-bound to Hawaii a multi-lingual hand-out on water recreational hazards.

The HTA is involved in a number of visitor safety and security programs, such as the Visitor Assistance Program to support visitors who have been affected by adversities while vacationing in Hawaii, the Closed Circuit Camera Television surveillance program at high visitor traffic areas on Oahu, the development of visitor safety brochures for Kauai and Maui, and internet sites such as travelsmarthawaii.org and www.hawaiibeachsafety.org developed by the Coastal Geology Group and the Hawaii Lifeguard Association, which was reported in the May 23, 2007 article cited in the first WHEREAS of the resolutions.

The HTA has looked into providing such an informational brochure to passengers on in-bound flights and found out that it will cost approximately \$90,000 for printing, sorting to put foreign language form in each packet, wrapping, shipping, storing, and delivery to the airport of 5.9 million pieces per year. The HTA is willing to do the printing, however, we suggest that the expenditure not be made until the Department of Transportation determines that it can distribute the brochures. Further, in terms of effectiveness, we do not feel that this is an effective way of conveying the information. It is more effective through websites, such as travelsmarthawaii.org and www.hawaiibeachsafety.org, or a brochure at the airport, all of which are already being done.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



CHIYOME LEINAALA FUKINO, M.D.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P.O. Box 3378
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File:

Senate Committee on Tourism and Government Operations

SCR 166, REQUESTING THE HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WATER SAFETY ORGANIZATIONS TO DEVELOP VISITOR WATER SAFETY INFORMATION

Testimony of Chiyome Leinaala Fukino, M.D.
Director of Health

April 10, 2008, 1:00 pm

1 **Department's Position:** The Department of Health supports SCR 166 and will support the
2 Hawaii Tourism Authority, the Department of Transportation, and appropriate water safety
3 organizations to improve water safety. We also offer comments.

4 **Fiscal Implications:** There is no funding specified for the costs associated with developing and
5 disseminating the handout.

6 **Purpose and Justification:** This resolution requests that the Hawaii Tourism Authority in
7 cooperation with the Department of Health, the Department of Transportation, and water safety
8 organizations produce and distribute aboard all incoming mainland and international flights a visitor
9 water safety information multi-lingual handout to provide education on water recreational hazards.

10 Since ocean drowning is the leading cause of injury-related deaths among Hawaii visitors and
11 non-residents, and is the sixth leading cause of injury-related death to residents, it is important to
12 educate both residents and visitors alike. We'd like to point out that there are existing collaborative
13 efforts between the City & County of Honolulu's Ocean Safety and Lifeguard Services Division, the UH
14 School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology (SOEST), and the Hawaiian Lifeguard Association

1 (HLA), to educate the public about ocean safety. These efforts include: 1) promoting and maintaining a
2 web site that provides accurate and current information about beach conditions and hazards
3 (www.hawaiibeachsafety.org), and 2) and plans to make this information available through various
4 venues such as visitor education on in-bound flights, wide screen TVs in hotel lobbies, and news alerts.
5 The proposed development of a water safety handout for visitors on all incoming flights needs to be
6 integrated with existing efforts and involve the expertise of those agencies named above, in addition to
7 Neighbor Island Lifeguard and Public Safety agencies, to ensure a comprehensive approach to ocean
8 drowning prevention. Given the ocean safety education efforts in place, it is also important to determine
9 whether a water safety education handout on board aircraft is the most effective approach for educating
10 visitors on ocean safety aboard in-coming flights to Hawaii.

11 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



COUNTY OF KAUAI
Fire Department
Mo'ikeha Building
4444 Rice Street, Suite 295
Lihu'e, Kaua'i, Hawaii 96766

April 8, 2008

The Honorable Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair
Committee on Tourism and Government Operations
The State Senate
Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 213
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Nishihara:

Subject: S.C.R. 166 Requesting the Hawai'i Tourism Authority, in Cooperation and Conjunction with the Department of Health and Appropriate Water Safety Organizations, to Furnish Onboard a Visitor Water Safety Information Multi-Lingual Handout to Provide Education on Water Recreational Hazards.

I am Robert Westerman, Fire Chief for the County of Kaua'i Fire Department (KFD). The KFD supports the intent of SCR 166, which would support the Hawaii Tourism Authority, the Department of Transportation, and appropriate water safety organizations to improve water safety. Our main concern is that there is no funding attached.

This resolution requests that the Hawaii Tourism Authority in cooperation with the Department of Health, the Department of Transportation, and water safety organizations produce and distribute aboard all incoming mainland and international flights a visitor water safety information multi-lingual handout to provide education on water recreational hazards.

Since ocean drowning is the leading cause of injury-related deaths among Hawaii visitors and non-residents, and is the sixth leading cause of injury-related death to residents, it is important to educate both residents and visitors alike. We'd like to point out that there are existing collaborative efforts between the County of Kaua'i Fire Department, Kaua'i Office of Economic Development, Kaua'i Tourism Authority, the UH School of Ocean and Earth

Honorable Clarence K. Nishihara
April 8, 2008
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Science and Technology (SOEST), and the Kaua'i Lifeguard Association (KLA), Kaua'i Water Safety Task Force, Wasabi Marketing, Kaua'i Ocean Resource Council (KORC) to educate the public about ocean safety. These efforts include: 1) promoting and maintaining a web site that provides accurate and current information about beach conditions and hazards (www.hawaii beachesafety.org), and 2) and plans to make this information available through various venues such as visitor education on in-bound flights, wide screen TVs in hotel lobbies, and news alerts. The proposed development of a water safety handout for visitors on all incoming flights needs to be integrated with existing efforts and involve the expertise of those agencies named above, in addition to Neighbor Island Lifeguard and Public Safety agencies, to ensure a comprehensive approach to ocean drowning prevention. Given the ocean safety education efforts in place, it is also important to determine whether a water safety education handout on board aircraft is the most effective approach for educating visitors on ocean safety aboard in-coming flights to Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please call me at (808) 241-6500.

Sincerely,



Robert Westerman
Fire Chief, County of Kaua'i

RFW/eld