

Senate  
Twenty-fourth Legislature  
Regular Session of 2008

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Hearing  
Friday, February 22, 2008  
1:15 p.m.

Testimony by: Ralph C. Boyea, Legislative Advocate, Hawai'i County Council

**Testimony in favor of SCR 57 –REQUESTING THAT PAHOA HIGH AND INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DEDICATE ITS GYMNASIUM IN HONOR OF FORMER REPRESENTATIVE HELENE H. HALE, BY CHANGING THE NAME OF THE GYMNASIUM TO “HELENE H. HALE GYMNASIUM”**

Chairperson Sakamoto and Honored Senators,

On behalf of the Hawai'i County Council, I ask you to pass SCR 57. SCR 57 names the Pahoa High and Intermediate school gymnasium after Helene H. Hale. This resolution is highly appropriate. As the elected Representative for House District 4, Helene Hale worked tirelessly to get the funding for the new gymnasium in Pahoa. But that is only a very small part of the justification for naming the facility after her.

Helene Hale has been working her entire lifetime on behalf of the people of Hawai'i. She was elected to the County of Hawaii Board of Supervisors from 1950 to 1954; she was the Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors and County Chief Executive Officer [precursor to the Mayor] from 1963 to 1964; she served on the Hawaii County Council from 1980 to 1994; she was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention; and she served as State Representative from 2000 to 2006. Her political career spanned over 50 years. The people of Hawaii were well served by this remarkable individual. Honoring her in this manner will show current and future generations the gratitude and respect that we have for those who distinguish themselves by working hard for their communities.

We humbly ask for your support of SCR 57.

Chad Ahia  
1846 Kalaniana'ole Ave., Hilo, HI 96720

**Honorable Norman Sakamoto, Chair  
Hawaii State Senate Committee on Education**

Friday, February 22, 2008, 1:15 pm  
Conference Room 225  
State Capitol

**In support of SCR 57: Pahoa High & Intermediate; Gymnasium Name Change to Helene H. Hale Gymnasium**

I have come to know Helene Hale rather well having worked on her legislative staff for several years there in Honolulu. Throughout that time, my respect for her and the values that she represents never failed to increase. I think many would agree with me that Mrs. Hale has through many of her actions, come to represent everything we consider *pono* today, thus she is very deserving of this proposed honor.

Many people across our state have come to know her for her firsts. She was the first woman as well as the first African-American elected to executive office in Hawaii. Just a couple of weeks ago, the NAACP gave her their Lifetime Achievement award in recognition of these firsts. She also became the eldest person ever elected to statewide office for a first term when she entered the State House at age 80 in 2000. These I believe are the product of a lifetime living on the progressive edge of our society, pushing further and further toward bringing our country's founding ideals of equality and universal justice to fruition.

Although not an official *first*, I think that it is amazing that she completed her college undergraduate degree and went on to complete a master's degree in the midst of the Great Depression up in Minnesota. College and especially graduate study were not things for women to do, let alone black women.

Mrs. Hale's innate determination would come to aid her shortly after when she and her husband moved to South Kona as schoolteachers in 1947. At that time, South Kona became a place of refuge for Japanese families who found a way to complete their indenture on the plantations. They would grow coffee as sharecroppers as a way for them to build a new life but they instead found themselves caught in another vicious cycle because of predatory rents, the landlords setting them after finding out the revenue from the harvest. Following her instinct to do what is *pono*, Mrs. Hale began to protest and advocate on their behalf for fair treatment. Her advocacy landed her on the watch-list of the Territorial Un-American Activities Committee and labeled as a communist agitator. Undeterred, she ran for office.

She ran for the Hawaii County Board of Supervisors and became a part of what we now refer to as the '54 Revolution. Nine years later, she was elected Chairman of the Board of Supervisors and Executive Officer of the County of Hawaii. I once asked her how she got into a position of running for board chairman. She said that all the boys were scared and thought it couldn't be done, so the work of showing that a Democrat could become executive officer was left to the woman.

Although Mrs. Hale left public life frequently to raise her family and tend her family businesses, her impact over her cumulative years of service is tremendous. While board chairman, she founded the Merrie Monarch as a way to stimulate business during a period of recession in Hilo. Kumu hula George Na'ope directed the first festival, although it wasn't the Hawaiian cultural festival it has become today since Hawaiians then were skeptical of public performances of sacred hula. Mrs. Hale always credits Dorothy Thompson who seized the upwelling of native Hawaiian pride during the Hawaiian Renaissance to transform the program into what it is today.

Mrs. Hale was there too at the 1974 Constitutional Convention actively supporting the addition of the then-almost lost Hawaiian language as an official state language as well as advocating for greater civil liberties. Upon returning to the Hawaii County Council, she was the first to push for the construction of a sewage system in Hilo and Kailua-Kona.

Then while in the State House of Representatives, Mrs. Hale pushed for the completion of the Kikala-Keokea Homestead for the native Hawaiians displaced by the Kalapana lava flow, the construction of a gymnasium for Pahoia High & Intermediate School, and the re-engagement of our state government in international affairs during this time of globalization. Her work on securing funding for Pahoia High gym came from a promise made to the high school athletic director to see what she could do while she was still on the county council. The high school has to use a termite-infested wooden gym built by the Ola'a Sugar Plantation in the 1920's and inherited by the county.

Mrs. Hale and many others in the community thought that the condition of the gym was physical proof of our disinterest in investing in our children. For a rural district with a heavy drug problem and its attending social ills, school sports are an important activity for those students who want to be drug free. Because of her love for the children of Puna and because she is not one to break promises, she secured the funding and the gym is being built right now in Pahoia.

Speaking with her a couple of months ago in Hilo, I asked her how the gym was going. She said it was everything she and the school athletic director could have hoped for, but she thought time was moving too fast and the bureaucracy was moving too slow and admitted to having her doctor check her over to make sure she'd make it to the dedication of the gym. I'm sure she will and I think that it would be a wonderful surprise for her to be honored in this way.

Thank you.

**testimony**

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**From:** Barbara Hilyer [babs50in05@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 21, 2008 11:50 AM  
**To:** testimony  
**Subject:** SCR 57

Chairman Norman Sakamoto  
Committee on Education  
Re: SCR 57 Hearing February 22 at 1:15pm

I encourage you to name the Pahoa Gymnasium for Helene H. Hale in recognition of her years of service and commitment to the county and state of Hawaii.

As I am sure you are aware, Helene has served in various elected positions in Hawaii for over 30 years. As she turns 90 years old March 23, this would be a wonderful capstone to her service as well as a grand birthday gift.

Thank you for your consideration.

S. Barbara Hilyer  
262 Anela Street  
Hilo, Hawaii  
959-7423

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**From:** MomBurgess@aol.com [mailto:MomBurgess@aol.com]

**Sent:** Thursday, February 21, 2008 12:46 PM

**To:** Public Access Room

**Subject:** SCR 57

**Please vote "yes" for the bill to name the Pahoa Hawaii Gym in honor of Helene Hale. She has persisted for years in having this structure at last being built. She has continued to work on an advisory committee during it's construction. Her efforts have made the new gym possible. It is only fitting that her efforts be recognized by having the gym named for Helene Hale.**

**Sara Burgess  
15-2721 Ohiki Street  
Pahoa, HI 96778**

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**testimony**

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**From:** Indira Hale Tucker [indirahaletucker@verizon.net]  
**Sent:** Friday, February 22, 2008 9:11 AM  
**To:** testimony  
**Subject:** SCR 57 Hearing 2-22-08

**LATE**

2-22-08

To: Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair  
Education Committee  
From: Indira Hale Tucker

Re: SCR 57 Hearing February 22, 2008 – 1:15 p.m.  
Naming the Pahoia High School Gym in honor of Helene Hale

Dear Chairman Sakamoto:

I write in support of the above-described Resolution to propose naming the Pahoia High School Gym in Pahoia, Hawaii, in honor of HELENE HALE.

Helene Hale came to Hawaii in 1947 and began her career as an English and Physical Education teacher at Konawaena High School, Kona, HI. After retiring from the Hawaii State House of Representatives in 2006, she restarted her Model United Nations project with high school and middle school students on the Big Island.

While her extraordinary career and public service has covered a lot of ground inbetween those dates, education has been at the heart and soul of her efforts in every field of endeavor and contribution. She is equally a believer and personal practitioner of “you should never stop learning” and the “value of physical exercise in personal well-being.”

A new gym for Pahoia High School became one of the projects closest to her heart while serving in the House of Representatives from 2001 to 2006.

For all the above-stated reasons, I believe that it would be a most fitting tribute to Helene Hale to approve SCR 57 in support of naming the Pahoia High School Gym in her honor as her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on March 23<sup>rd</sup> draws near.

Thank you.

Indira Hale Tucker