

HB 242

The Twenty-Fifth Legislature
Regular Session of 2009

LATE

THE SENATE
Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Shan S. Tsutsui, Vice Chair

State Capitol, Conference Room 211
Thursday, April 2, 2009; 9:30 a.m.

**STATEMENT OF THE ILWU LOCAL 142 ON H.B. 242, HD1, SD1
RELATING TO AGRICULTURE**

The ILWU Local 142 supports H.B. 242, HD1, SD1, which appropriates funds, matched dollar-for-dollar by federal funds, in cash, or by private in-kind donations, for the planning, repair, and modification of agricultural facilities at the former Del Monte operation on Oahu and at Maui Community College.

Throughout its history, the ILWU has never wavered in its support for preserving agriculture in Hawaii. Even as the sugar and pineapple industries have declined, we have supported the development of diversified agriculture. As plantations closed, we encouraged workers to consider diversified agriculture as a means of supporting themselves and their families.

But we know how difficult agriculture can be and that challenges abound--whether it's marketing the products grown or producing enough to provide a consistent supply or securing long-term leases or finding workers. We have promoted farmers working in cooperatives to pool their resources. We have supported federal and state funding to help keep agricultural operations viable.

In the end, agriculture in Hawaii will benefit us all. If the food for our table can be grown in Hawaii, we can become self-sustaining. If our landscape is green, open and beautiful, we will attract more visitors. If we can maintain agricultural communities, we can preserve a way of life rooted in the earth that can help shape the values of the next generation of Hawaii residents.

Toward this end, H.B. 242, HD1, SD1 is proposing an appropriation to encourage more agricultural development. The ILWU is particularly familiar with the proposal of Hawaii Agriculture Research Center (HARC) to develop former Del Monte properties promised to it by the James Campbell Company.

The ILWU represented the workers of Del Monte in collective bargaining for more than 50 years. Sadly, the company shut down pineapple production in late 2006. Some of the workers found jobs at golf courses, produce companies, food distributors and the like, but many gravitated back to working in agriculture.

Indeed, those who live in Kunia Camp, adjacent to the buildings being proposed for development of "value added agricultural products," have deliberately sought agricultural jobs to ensure their continued tenancy in the camp. HARC has made agricultural work a condition to remain as tenants in the camp. As a result, many have found jobs with agricultural companies in Kunia. The irony, however, is that work in the proposed facilities may not qualify as "agricultural work" to HARC's satisfaction.

Nevertheless, we support H.B. 242, HD1, SD1 as one means of continuing the viability of agriculture in Hawaii. While Hawaii's current economy is faltering and the Legislature is challenged to generate money rather than spend it, we believe an appropriation for this project will be a worthwhile investment in the future of our state.

The ILWU urges passage of H.B. 242, HD1, SD1. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.