

Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i  
Supporting S.B. 266 HD 1 Relating to Global Warming  
House Committee on Finance  
Wednesday, April 8, 2009, 4:30PM, Rm. 308

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i supports S.B. 266 HD 1. We also believe that an allocation from the barrel fee proposed in H.B.1271 is an appropriate method of paying for the analysis and task force proposed in S.B. 266.

While the Legislature passed landmark legislation in 2007 to put Hawai'i on the path to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, that legislation does not provide authority or resources toward assessing, mitigating and adapting to the inevitable effects of climate change. Regardless of the level of reduced emissions, Hawai'i and the world will feel the effects of human-induced climate change for generations to come.

Climate change is an imminent and unprecedented threat to both natural systems (e.g., forests, coastlines, coral reefs, wetlands) and to every person in Hawai'i that—whether they know it or not—depends on services from the natural environment for their livelihoods, health and welfare. Scientists have examined the evidence and rapid climate change is real; it is clearly caused by human activity; it is already a problem for habitat for plants and animals; and, if sources of CO<sub>2</sub> are not dramatically reduced, climate change could well have catastrophic results for people and their relationship with the natural environment.

Even if we drastically reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions now, we will still feel the effects of climate change. In Hawai'i, science is indicating that this may include:

- More frequent and more severe storms;
- Overall, less rainfall and therefore less fresh water;
- Higher temperatures that may affect the health of forested watersheds;
- Climatic conditions even more conducive to invasive plants, insects and diseases;
- Sea level rise and high wave events that will harm coastal areas and cause seawater infiltration into groundwater systems; and
- Ocean acidification that will inhibit the growth of coral reefs.

The health of Hawaii's unique but threatened natural resources directly affects our economy and quality of life. Beyond breathtaking beauty, these resources provide essential natural services that make life possible in the middle of the vast Pacific Ocean. From native forests that give us fresh water, erosion control, and cultural treasures, to abundant coral reefs that provide food, recreation, and protection from storms, we all depend daily on nature to sustain us. However, higher temperatures, more intense storm events but overall less rainfall, and ocean acidification threaten to alter the health and function of the natural systems upon which our lives, livelihood and lifestyles depend.

As this bill points out, we must be prepared to understand and respond to those effects.

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### COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

*Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair*

*Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair*

4:30 pm

Wednesday, April 8, 2009

Conference Room 308

### SB 266 SD2 HD1- RELATING TO GLOBAL WARMING

#### STRONGLY SUPPORT - One Amendment

My name is Shannon Wood speaking on behalf of the *Windward Ahupua`a Alliance*. Before I start my testimony, I want to express my thanks to this Committee and the *House* leadership for waiving the 48-hour notice rule to hear this bill.

SB 266 SD2 HD2 - RELATING TO GLOBAL WARMING creates a Climate Change Task Force to assess the impacts of climate change in Hawai`i over the next 25 - 50 years. Here is its mandate:

1. Assess the current and potential impacts of global warming and climate change trends on the citizens, natural resources, and the economy of the State;
2. Assess the potential impacts of rising ocean levels as a result of climate change on the citizens, natural resources, and the economy of the State;
3. Estimate the costs to the State of the adverse effects associated with climate change and rising sea levels;
4. Make recommendations to the legislature and the governor on measures that would address or mitigate the near- and long-term effects of climate change.

The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Task Force established by the *Legislature* in 2007 has done significant research to prepare us to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels to power up our electricity plants and our transportation sectors.

However, Act 234's mandate does NOT deal with issues as diverse as re-evaluating county planning ordinances & zoning codes, addressing beach losses, protecting potable water supplies, reducing loss of habitat, mitigating the impacts of major storms, flooding, droughts & wildfires, and re-visiting how we live, work & play when we begin to really feel the impacts of Post-Peak Oil leading to a permanent economic shift away from mass tourism and, to a lesser extent, dependence upon the military.

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Some folks will oppose SB 266 SD2 HD2 - RELATING TO GLOBAL WARMING by arguing that we cannot afford to spend any money on new government programs because of Hawai'i's fiscal condition; however, a close examination of state funds as well as the very real possibility of being able to tap into some of the federal stimulus package dollars indicates that money will be available to help underwrite the costs of setting up the Climate Change Task Force.

Please see the graphic attached to the testimony for one funding resource - a barrel tax which will raise some \$50 million dollars to underwrite a number of programs dealing with renewable energy and the impacts of rising seas on our state.

Furthermore, both *EPA* & *NOAA* have come out in support of providing federal assistance for local governments. For more information, go to

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/morenews/20090312.html>

There are also private local, national & international foundations which are funding community-based efforts to address climate change and its impacts.

I urge you to pass this bill out after changing the date in Section 3 to July 1, 2009. Again, *mahalo* for waiving the 48-hour notification rule to hear SB 266 SD2 HD1 .

Shannon Wood, *President & Co-Founder*  
*Windward Ahupua`a Alliance*

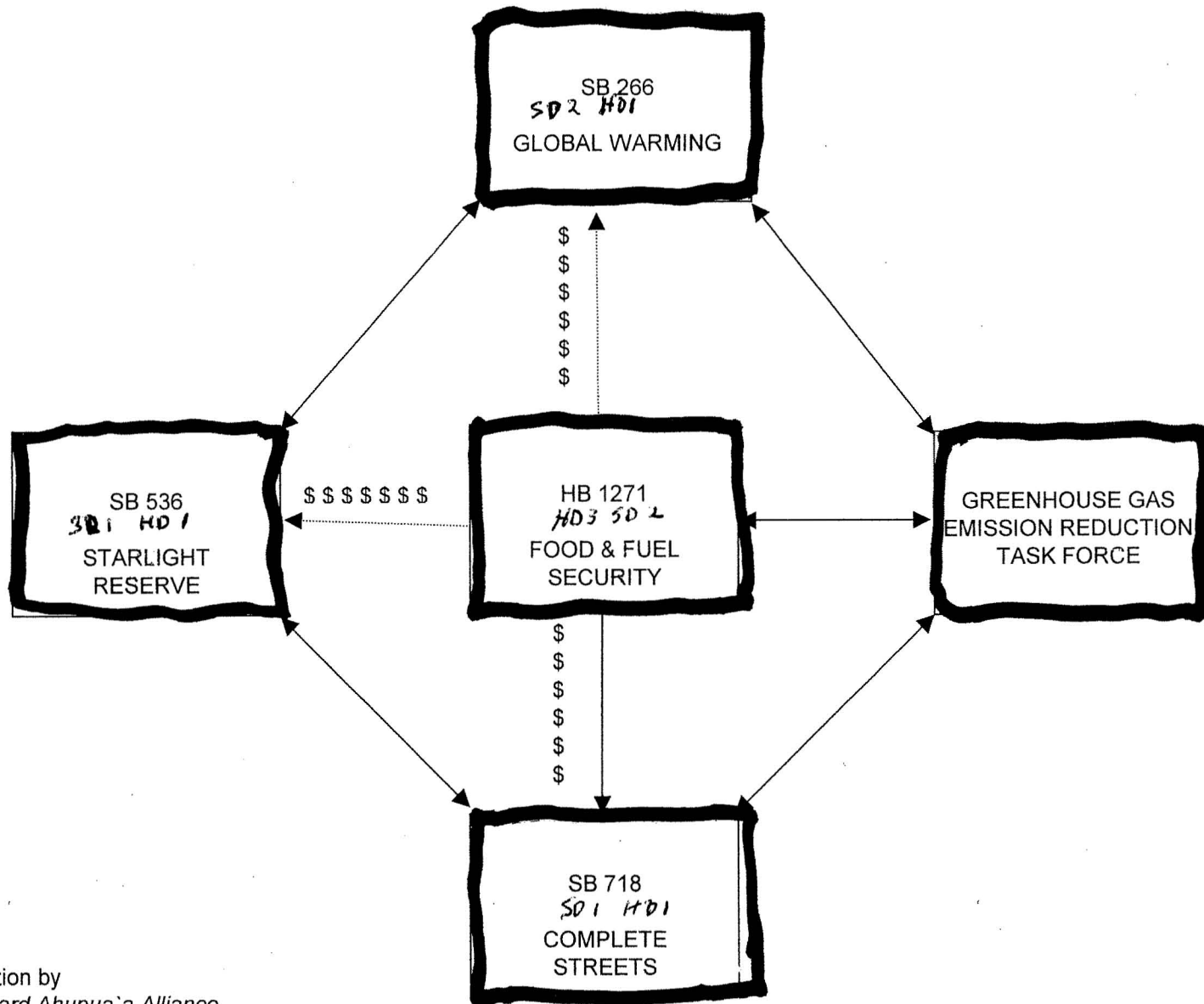


Illustration by  
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