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Bill No. 266  
nature.org/hawaii  
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Date 3/18/09  
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Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i  
Supporting S.B. 266 SD 2 Relating to Global Warming  
House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection  
Thursday, March 19, 2009, 10:00AM, Rm. 325

The Nature Conservancy of Hawaii supports S.B. 266 SD 2. 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 CO2 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 CO2 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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OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Legislative Testimony

**SB 266 SD2, RELATING TO GLOBAL WARMING**

House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection

March 19, 2009

10:00 a.m.

Room: 325

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** SB266, SD2, which seeks to establish a global warming task force to assess the impacts of climate warming trends in the state.

As a member of the Hawai'i Ocean Resources Management Plan working group, OHA sees firsthand just how unprepared Hawai'i is for the inevitable effects of global warming and climate change. For example, other states have begun to coordinate responses, initiate studies, and change laws in anticipation of global warming. On the federal level, the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) at 16 USC §1451 (1) urges, "Because global warming may result in a substantial sea level rise with serious adverse effects in the coastal zone, coastal states must anticipate and plan for such an occurrence."

We see that this bill proposes to begin the difficult work that surely looms ahead of us. OHA believes that our best approach in dealing with these adverse impacts is to be proactive rather than reactive. It is essential that we be prepared and informed in order to best prepare and make the best decisions regarding this serious threat. Additionally, our state will feel the effects more than most states, so we need to be creative and ready to make difficult choices to ensure a better future for ourselves and our mo'opuna.

Of course, these times offer challenges in terms of funding, and we note that whatever funding mechanism is used, it will be money well spent. Funding shortfalls are not reasons to shirk this needed duty. OHA also notes that the small potential for duplicative effort with the Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Task Force not be a reason to avoid the purpose of this bill, but rather serve as evidence of our forward-looking approach to the potential devastation that this event possesses.

Therefore, OHA urges the Committee to PASS SB 266, SD2.  
Thank you for the opportunity to testify.