

**Opening Day Remarks for the Senate Minority  
By Senator Sam Slom, Minority Floor Leader  
Twenty-Fifth Legislature  
State of Hawai'i  
Regular Session of 2009**

Thank you, Madam President. Aloha. This is truly a historic day; you can write this down in your book—this is a day that a Republican yields. Republicans never yield to anyone or any position!

Mahalo Senate President Hanabusa, Governor Lingle, Lieutenant Governor, Chief Justice, former governors Ariyoshi, Waihe'e and Cayetano, to all of our distinguished guests and to you, the overburdened taxpayers of the State of Hawai'i. We, too, offer our congratulations to President Obama and all re-elected lawmakers. Some of you may know that I lived in the same apartment building with Barry Obama for many years and that I worked with his grandmother, the late Madelyn Dunham, at the Bank of Hawai'i. So I echo the words of the Senate President—this truly is a special place that brings all of us together.

Senate President, I also want to commend you on your words and pledge the continued support of the Minority to help enact positive legislation for ALL the people of Hawai'i. And I know that it's going to be a positive year because you're not wearing black, you're wearing your bright orange sunshine.

You've heard from the Majority and now you're going to hear the rest of the story. Some may wonder what the Senate Minority stands for and how we can have any relevancy or impact on policy in Hawai'i, outnumbered as we are, twelve to one. (How would you like to make this speech today?) And yet, one person, one idea, one effort has always been extremely important. One person, just last week, U.S. Airways Captain Chesley B. "Sully" Sullenberger saved the lives of more than 150 other people in what is described as the 'Miracle on the Hudson'. It shows what one person and good leadership can do for all others, and that's what we strive for today.

In the opening prayer you heard the words "stand firm". This is extremely important and this is what we intend to do. Your Republican Minority, in number, may be just two of twenty-five state senators, but in actuality we represent more than 40 percent of all of the votes cast, many thousands more of the "silent majority," and we have a strong and consistent philosophy, an unwavering voice, and a vote. We also have good humor—a useful trait in this building, in good times and bad. We strive to work hard, do our legislative homework and support

leadership when we believe they are right—and to tell them when they're not. We never forget who sent us here and what you expect of all of us.

Have we had an impact? We shape legislation, we point out errors and omissions in proposals, we actively take part in committees and the advise and consent process, and, if we're lucky, some of our bills are so good that the Majority will take them for their own and enact them. Now, we don't care who gets the credit as long as Hawai'i gets good legislation.

Now many people and the media have approached this 25<sup>th</sup> state legislative session with an outlook of gloom, doom, grim times and negative choices. Your Minority approaches this legislative session not with fear, but with enthusiasm for the opportunities that these tough times present to all of us.

There is a two-party system here, or at least two distinct philosophies. Now, one party has been expert at winning elections and controlling the government for more than 45 years, and they have stressed taxation, spending and decision-making by government. Selective sacrifice has been their mantra. The buzz word of the recent election was—say it—“change,” but yet change seems to have escaped Hawai'i's government and our public education.

Our philosophy emphasizes individual risk and accomplishment, lower taxes on families and businesses, transparency in government and more economic choices for everyone. We stand for individual rights superior to those of the federal or state government, and we want the government chained by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Recent events have shown us that too much reliance on government has resulted in government inaction, corruption, conflicts of interest, unwise redistribution of your wealth through subsidies, preferential treatment and ill-conceived bailouts. In short, government has not solved problems; it treats symptoms and creates unintended consequences.

There has been widespread public discontent with legislative bodies—the Congress, City Councils, and even the State Legislature. Many believe we spend too much time on increasing our own salaries and our own benefits, exempting us from the laws that we passed for others, and for covering up questionable ethics. Your Minority has spoken out and introduced legislation to correct these abuses and we will continue to do so. I said months ago that we in government should not have a pay increase when so many people in our community are suffering and having a difficult time economically. Instead of exempting us from laws, we should be held to a higher standard. I've got to tell you, for four years now I've attended sexual harassment training classes and mandated ethics training. What's wrong with this picture when you have to teach your elected officials not to sexually harass and to be ethical? Maybe what we should do instead, at least in the Senate, is install breathalyzers at every desk before we speak.

Our opinion today is that our problems are not economic but they are political. And we can address these economic challenges through support of competitive private market capitalism which allows us more of the greatest amount of freedom and individual choice, unavailable under more government control. The market hasn't failed us; individuals and part of government has.

We don't want to urge you to just hunker down, reduce your consumer spending and economic activity and further reduce your standard of living. We stress success and prosperity, not just survival, and we know this is possible even in these difficult times.

We are positive and believe we have reason to be so. We need to get back to work, stop whining, not look for government handouts, and be more productive and creative. Successful businesses do just that—they reinvent themselves for changing times. We have numerous examples of that in Hawai'i, including Ko Olina, Hawaiian Airlines, City Mill, The Systemcenter, Oils of Aloha, CyberCom, and many others that we can cite.

The good news is that we have the tools and resources despite slowing revenues, rising unemployment, business closures and home foreclosures. The recession is real but we do not have to be mesmerized or paralyzed by bad news. Everything in life is cyclical. And your Minority always has hope and faith in Hawai'i's talented and remarkable individual people.

This year, Hawai'i is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of statehood and we proudly proclaim the many blessings of citizenship as Americans. We are appreciative and respectful of our Native Hawaiian culture and its many contributions. And the best way to show that respect is to expand the rights of every citizen in the State of Hawai'i.

We honor all of our men and women in uniform and are grateful for the military's many contributions, not just the financial part—the contributions in leadership they make every day to our community. We must not hesitate to stand up for them vocally, not just when it is convenient to do so, because every day they sacrifice a great deal and risk their lives to protect all of us.

To those in law enforcement and our first responders who keep us safe, even during power blackouts and earthquakes—we thank you. We cherish our kupuna and the lessons that we learn from them. And hopefully I'm getting old enough that I can join them.

But we are also invigorated by our youth who have unlimited potential. Moanalua grad turned golf pro Tadd Fujikawa made us all—and the nation—proud of us this past weekend, as do surfer Carissa Moore and football star Manti Te'o of Punahou, Castle High grad and Olympic gold medalist Bryan Clay. And right here with me, I'm so happy that we've got young people—

Dylan Encarnacion, and we've got Aina Kay, Gordon Hemmings, and also Jake Taniguchi. These are the young faces and the future of Hawai'i; mahalo. But there's so much more. There are so many amazing people from Hawai'i who are talented in music, art, dance, acting, production, robotics, business, technology and much more. These are individuals with God-given talent.

This session we pledge to the people of Hawai'i, who look to all of us for leadership, to listen even more, to work even harder, to cooperate for the good of all of our people, and to passionately continue to stand up against bad laws, poor economics and loss of freedom and choice. Now, some have suggested that they want to jettison some values and positions just because they are old. We will retain and honor the permanent values which stand the test of time and should not be partisan.

In the words of Winston Churchill, "We will never give up, never, never, never, never, never." Your Minority stands for the enforcement of existing laws rather than duplication with more legislation, and specifically (so you know where we stand):

- No more taxes. Hawai'i residents are taxed too much; we are among the top four taxed states in the nation. The best economic stimulus is money left with you so that you can spend it on your own family and your own business in the ways that you think best. We support a tax holiday for general excise taxation and elimination of excessive taxes and fees.
- As the Senate President talked about the budget, it will be difficult. We must honestly balance the budget—as every individual, family and small business must do every day. We've got to stop raiding the 'special funds' such as the Hurricane Relief Fund, or be honest, do the right thing and abolish all those funds. We need to eliminate those non-productive programs and expenditures; among them: tax credits given without proper oversight, grants to 'special' friends of lawmakers, costly mandates and projects such as outside, that \$1 million 'bounce-about' which is covering up the tile restoration. One million bucks for that. We can do better than that.
- Let me talk about gambling. It may be on the table, but we will continue to oppose gambling as neither an economic nor social benefit, especially since no tax reduction give-back has been proposed with gambling, only more money for the government to spend.
- Education. We all say we want better education. We in the Minority support more educators in the school, less money for questionable programs with no outcome

accountability, less money for a bloated bureaucracy, and a full audit of the Department of Education. We also support small community schools. Now, it's strange to me; for years we pump money into reducing the teacher-pupil ratio. Now that we've achieved it, we want to close those schools which mean so much to various communities. We will oppose that. We also support strongly more charter schools, substitute teachers and home schooling parity.

- Energy. The two of us have got a great deal of energy here and you'll see that during this legislative session. We continue to support voluntary, incentivized alternative energy, including wind, solar, geothermal, OTEC and nuclear. My colleague Senator Hemmings has proposed a bold nuclear option incorporating a nuclear commission exploring possibilities. Now for those of you that are frightened by the word 'nuclear,' let's remember that we already host nuclear activities on our submarines, and in some of its darkest days, the island of Kaua'i was saved by a nuclear power plant generated by that military submarine.
- Environment. Republicans understand we can't have a viable economy without a protected environment. It's not "either/or," but certain mandates, regulations and invasive species prohibitions need to be examined adequately and objectively for their important impact and unintended consequences.
- Turning to health, we must now stop the cause of losing those in the medical profession by saving our doctors with a real change in tort reform, equitable fee reimbursement, the abolition of state SHPDA, and by embracing private, non-tax investment in medical facilities on all the neighbor islands.
- I was enthused by the President's remarks about the tax surcharge, which is damaging so many individuals and businesses. We can't afford billions of dollars for ego steel-on-steel transit when congestion relief and new design is what will help O'ahu residents and taxpayers the most. We need to speed alternative transportation construction and alternatives.
- And turning to law enforcement, we fully support the law enforcement coalition initiatives. But instead of giving lip service to justice, we support tougher judges, more choices, protection and services for victims, and swift, equal enforcement for those who break our laws and harm our residents.
- Finally, on the sanctity of life: we will continue for protection of the unborn and oppose so-called partial birth abortions. If we cannot stand up for life at its beginning, than all of the other basic laws are useless.

Your Minority has many other ideas for diversifying our economy and reducing dependence on the visitor industry. We don't want just one egg producer, one dairy, one electric company and fewer farmers. We propose expanded private-public partnerships, targeted tax incentives for job creation, and state water and land policy reform to help the farmers and ranchers insure agriculture sustainability. We also see that we can better use our resources and facilities such as Senator Hemmings' idea of making the Ke'ehi Private Boat Harbor both more accessible to the public and a great marina. We need to cease class warfare between those with wealth and those without. Hawai'i is short of venture capital and we support an improved business climate to clearly signal that we are serious about business investment and new jobs here and now.

While we may appear small in number, we are large in the willingness and capacity to think and act outside this square building. We have considerable ideas, tremendous dreams on how wonderful Hawai'i can be if its people aren't hampered by poor government choices. And we have the energy to make it all a reality. That's our stand.

Hawai'i honored Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. this week. He once said, "Almost always, the creative dedicated minority has made the world better." That's what we pledge to do. We are compassionate, but not at the expense of complacency of our fiscal responsibilities.

Can we make a difference? Help bring true change to Hawai'i? Yes, we can—more importantly, yes, we will, with your support.

As Edward Everett Hale said more than 200 years ago, "I am only one, but still I am one. I can't do everything, yet I can do something. And just because I can't do everything, I won't refuse to do the something I can do." Aloha, mahalo and God bless Hawai'i.