

House Minority Leader Lynn Finnegan  
Opening Day Speech  
January 20, 2010

Welcome Lt. Governor and Mrs. Aiona, Speaker Say,  
members of the House of Representatives, and all of you who  
took the time to be here today.

I think it's fair to say that the mantra of the majority of  
people in this chamber this past year has been "hope" and  
"change." *Your House Republicans agree with the majority!* It's  
time to fundamentally CHANGE the way we do things in Hawaii.  
The severity of our economic and budgetary challenges leaves us  
with no other alternative. Failure to change would be just that...a  
FAILURE. It's time to make a difference in the two main areas  
that dominate the hearts and minds of Hawaii's people:  
education and the economy.

Education

We've spent decade after decade trying to figure out how to fix education. Despite the \$2 billion we spend on education, the current DOE system continues to favor adults above students. I'm tired of hearing about Hawaii's education being ranked 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation. And you should be too! We can't fail our children AGAIN. It is time to end Furlough Fridays and other symptoms of our broken system and improve education. We are offering changes to instructional days, DOE accountability, the collective-bargaining process and public charter schools.

All of the legislative measures we will introduce focus on putting students and their needs first. Remember, the fundamental purpose of our educational system is to educate...not just to employ. Furlough Fridays demonstrate that we are not succeeding in our mission to put students first.

### Economy/ Budget

I believe that all of us want to improve our economy. The primary difference between the political parties lies in HOW we do it. It's a matter of survival – economic survival that doesn't

cause this fragile recovery to crumble. The challenges and hurdles that lie ahead in the path of full economic recovery require prudent decision-making and a long-term vision for sustainable economic growth. Our posture for economic recovery will include protecting residents from higher taxes and a higher cost of living, improving the business climate that includes decreasing the soaring unemployment insurance tax premiums, and promoting job growth measures that shape our vision for Hawaii's future. The House Republicans are committed to providing that kind of leadership here at the State Capitol.

Although there are signs of the economy turning around, the Republican Caucus believes that raising taxes to balance the budget is the wrong decision. We are one of the highest taxed states in the nation. The more we tax, the less our hardworking people and their families have to manage their family budgets. The higher the taxes, the bigger the government. The bigger the size of government, the more it contributes to inefficiency and the more it curtails personal freedom for our tax-paying residents. Answer this question, if we are to raise taxes to deal

with the budget shortfall, would we decrease taxes when the economy improves? The answer is no. In times like these, people are looking for ways to be self-sufficient, to succeed. Raising taxes penalizes self-sufficiency and success and is completely counterproductive during a recession. Its time that our state government lives within its means and makes sure that we still fund priorities like instruction days for students.

We can't fix our economic problems by increasing the taxes on businesses. Businesses don't have more money to give to the government especially during these times. Small businesses are the engine of economic growth. Shirokiya's recent announcement of laying off 71 employees in anticipation of the increasing unemployment insurance tax serves as powerful evidence of what businesses will and must do when taxes are increased. One of the fundamental differences between the majority and minority is the recognition that innovation in the private sector grows the economy far better than government can.

## Conclusion

Fundamentally, the more you tax people, the more we become dependent on government. The more we become dependent on government, the less opportunity and personal liberty we have. There is the enduring nature of America's promise of opportunity. The continuing immigration to America is powerful testimony that people are still seeking that kind of opportunity and promise, even today. These immigrants are consciously choosing to pursue opportunity, just like my dad and grandparents, and many of your family members before you. We, too, must consciously foster opportunity. The hope of Hawaii's future lies NOT in enabling inefficiencies and dependency. By embracing change and opportunity, Hawaii's best days lie ahead. It's time for things to change. It's time to put students and families first.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and colleagues; we look forward to working with you. To our guests who made it a point to come

and talk story the Republican members wanted me to invite you  
our offices.