



COLLEEN HANABUSA  
PRESIDENT

RUSSELL KOKUBUN  
VICE PRESIDENT

GARY L. HOOSER  
MAJORITY LEADER

FRED HEMMINGS  
MINORITY LEADER

## The Senate

STATE CAPITOL  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

FIRST DISTRICT  
DWIGHT Y. TAKAMINE

SECOND DISTRICT  
RUSSELL S. KOKUBUN

THIRD DISTRICT  
JOSH GREEN, M.D.

FOURTH DISTRICT  
SHAN S. TSUTSUI

FIFTH DISTRICT  
ROSALYN H. BAKER

SIXTH DISTRICT  
J. KALANI ENGLISH

SEVENTH DISTRICT  
GARY L. HOOSER

EIGHTH DISTRICT  
SAM SLOM

NINTH DISTRICT  
LES IHARA, JR.

TENTH DISTRICT  
BRIAN T. TANIGUCHI

ELEVENTH DISTRICT  
CAROL FUKUNAGA

TWELFTH DISTRICT  
BRICKWOOD GALUTERIA

THIRTEENTH DISTRICT  
SUZANNE CHUN OAKLAND

FOURTEENTH DISTRICT  
DONNA MERCADO KIM

FIFTEENTH DISTRICT  
NORMAN SAKAMOTO

SIXTEENTH DISTRICT  
DAVID Y. IGE

SEVENTEENTH DISTRICT  
MICHELLE N. KIDANI

EIGHTEENTH DISTRICT  
CLARENCE K. NISHIHARA

NINETEENTH DISTRICT  
MIKE GABBARD

TWENTIETH DISTRICT  
WILL ESPERO

TWENTY-FIRST DISTRICT  
COLLEEN HANABUSA

TWENTY-SECOND DISTRICT  
ROBERT BUNDA

TWENTY-THIRD DISTRICT  
CLAYTON HEE

TWENTY-FOURTH DISTRICT  
JILL N. TOKUDA

TWENTY-FIFTH DISTRICT  
FRED HEMMINGS

CHIEF CLERK  
CAROL TANIGUCHI

Wednesday, January 20, 2010  
State Senator Sam Slom – District 8 – R  
Minority Floor Leader

### Opening Day Remarks by the Senate Minority

**Aloha!**

While I understand the Majority Party's unilateral decision to end our tradition of making Hawaii's opening day colorful, special and unique, I disagree with it. We are all aware of our state's severe economic challenges, many of which have been created by this very legislature.

I concur that expenses should be cut back in the legislature, just as individuals, families and small business have been doing for years - not just for opening day - rather for all the financial choices this legislature makes.

Hawaii still enjoys two competitive philosophies within our government, and this is not dependent on the number of Senators. Our philosophy emphasizes individual risk and accomplishment, lower taxes on families and small businesses, transparency in government, more economic choices for everyone and a strong belief in the people of Hawaii.

We offer not just opposition to ill-conceived bills, but innovative alternatives and real solutions.

If the Majority party's goal today was to show the public we understand their pain and tough financial straits, rather than cancel our celebration, we should pledge that we will not increase taxes. We should immediately reduce the spectre of the 1,000 per cent unemployment compensation hike, pass overdue tort reform, and reduce state spending, waste, and debt to a rational level. We should work to get our students back in school without any more furlough days.

As Senator Hemmings so correctly points out, the overwhelmingly three big issues of the 2010 Session will be, *the budget, the budget and the budget.*

We both see the adversity of the current economic slowdown as a real opportunity to "right-size" government in Hawaii. For too long, our state government has been growing exponentially faster than the private sector and the wealth of the taxpayers called upon to support it. Through public workforce attrition and smart deployment of our limited resources, we can "right-size" government while simultaneously protecting core services.

Public education *must* be restructured. The furloughs and loss of instructional days are a black eye and national embarrassment for Hawaii. We *must* downsize the huge, costly and inefficient DOE bureaucracy while making more budgeted money and resources available for teachers and students in the classroom. Throwing more money at education - a whopping \$2.7 billion dollars a year - while enrollment, classroom teachers, instructional days and test scores decline, is not good business nor good education, and this *must* change.

Charter schools, which are more cost effective and efficient at educating our kids *must* be fully supported and their numbers uncapped. We *must* seriously re-evaluate decentralization. In the meantime, place the Superintendent of Education within the Governor's cabinet, and end the finger pointing, which drives the public, especially parents, understandably insane.

Hawaii needs an economic jumpstart, not from more government stimulus debt, but from the ideas and experience of those who create real jobs; the business people in our community. They have offered to help us. We need to listen to them and to act accordingly.

We talk of sustainability, but it should not be just related to energy. We should encourage families and small business to sustain their standard of living. How? By not overburdening them with more taxes and fees this session. We should not enact costly energy mandates while abandoning American energy drilling, consideration of new, micro nuclear facilities for Hawaii and other energy alternatives.

We understand we can't have a viable economy without a protected environment. It's not mutually exclusive. However, unrealistic taxes, mandates, regulations and prohibitions must be debated objectively to determine their full costs and unintended consequences.

There is widespread public discontent with our State Legislature. Many believe we spend too much time on increasing our own salaries and benefits, exempting ourselves from laws we pass for others and covering up questionable ethics. The good news is we have the tools and resources, despite slowing revenue estimates, if we have the political will to change.

This session we pledge to the people of Hawaii to work together, to listen, and to continue to speak out against bad laws, poor economics and loss of freedom and choice.

We will continue to favor the individual over government control.

We celebrate and honor all of our men and women in uniform and are grateful for the military's many contributions-not just financial-to our community.

We are compassionate, but not at the expense of complacency of our fiscal responsibilities. Further, we stand for the enforcement of existing laws rather than more legislation.

Many people and some in the media, approach this 25th State Legislature with an outlook of gloom, doom, grim times and negative choices. They look to government for answers.

Your Minority approaches this Legislative Session not with fear, but with enthusiasm for the opportunities that these tough times present. We look to the private competitive sector for real solutions.

Finally, what do we have to celebrate? We celebrate our individual God-given liberty and our ability to change things for the better. We celebrate being part of an America that provides for open debate in an elected legislative body. We celebrate the human achievements within our Hawaii.

We can turn the pessimism around with genuine positive efforts backed by political courage and long denied change in Hawaii. We can navigate a different course.

President Ronald Reagan, facing enormous economic challenges when he took office, gave his vision for our Nation at the time. It was positive and attainable as he proved. His vision, as is ours, was of the "Shining City on the Hill."

We can make that happen by focusing on what Hawaii can be, and we can begin today.

**Aloha, mahalo and God bless Hawaii!**