



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Written Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Tourism, Culture & International Affairs

March 22, 2010, 9:30 a.m.

By  
Virginia S. Hinshaw, Chancellor  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### HCR 174/HR 109 URGING PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA TO SELECT A LOCATION IN HAWAII AS THE SITE FOR HIS PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

Aloha, Chair Manahan, Vice Chair Tokioka and members of the House Committee on Tourism, Culture and International Affairs. I wish to express my support for this resolution. The possibility of having the President Obama Library here in Hawai'i is exciting because it would be a perfect fit for our Islands and recognizes the fact that he is the first United States President from Hawai'i.

The Obama family enjoys a special connection with the University of Hawai'i, so we are certainly intrigued at this possibility and look forward to working with others in our community to explore the potential for making the President Obama Library a reality.

Mahalo for your consideration of this resolution.

**HCR 174**  
**Barack Obama Presidential Library**

Testimony  
By Avelino J. Halagao, Jr.

and on behalf of  
Dr. Patricia Halagao

Mr. Chair, Members:

My name is A.J. Halagao. I was one of the hundreds of proud volunteers serving on the Hawaii for Obama campaign. My wife, Patricia, was also part of this effort.

After the presidential election, I helped organize and chaired the Hawaii for Obama Inaugural Gala in Washington, DC. It was an inauguration week I will never forget.

The memory I will always carry with me was the enormous pride of Hawaii residents, whether you traveled to Washington, DC or stayed in the islands. I thought to myself, I wish I could bottle up the energy, that level of enthusiasm, that pride.

Having the Obama Presidential Library in Hawaii will enable us to showcase our pride and our aloha for the first Hawaii-born president, forever.

Having the Obama Presidential Library in Hawaii will enable us to showcase Hawaii to the world as a place--not only as a vacation destination--but also as a venue to learn, to research and to exchange ideas on national and international issues and policies.

Having the Obama Presidential Library in Hawaii will inspire our children, and future generations. The message to our keiki: "You can be anything."

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Urging the President to consider Hawaii as the site of the Presidential Library is an important measure. But our support of this endeavor cannot stop with this resolution.

Over the next several years, we all have to work together to make this dream a reality. The state, the City & County of Honolulu, all the counties, the university, the private sector, community leaders and grassroots all have to be a part of this collaborative effort.

The resolution is indeed a critical first step, but down the road, we will have to do more, including investing time, people, money, and other valued resources. Most of all, we will need the political will, and your leadership.

Some may argue that other cities or states will also bid for this honor. And some naysayers will contest that they would never consider Honolulu or another city in Hawaii.

Let me remind you that the locations of recently-built presidential libraries include Little Rock, Arkansas; College State, Texas; Simi Valley, California; Atlanta, Georgia; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Yorba Linda, California.

With the exception of Atlanta, Honolulu is larger than all of these cities, and certainly has the capacity and infrastructure to support the influx of new visitors.

Barack Obama did not listen to naysayers when he decided to run for President; why should we?

I believe Hawaii is up to the challenge. If we work together, we can do this. Hawaii can do this. As we chanted throughout the '08 campaign, and it rings true today: "Yes, we can."

Mahalo.

A.J. Halagao, and on behalf of Patricia Halagao

**tokioka1-Elijah**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Friday, March 19, 2010 8:07 AM  
**To:** TCtestimony  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Testimony for HCR174 on 3/22/2010 9:30:00 AM  
**Attachments:** Obama Presidential Library proposal.pdf

Testimony for TCI 3/22/2010 9:30:00 AM HCR174

Conference room: 312  
Testifier position: support  
Testifier will be present: Yes  
Submitted by: Robert Perkinson  
Organization: Individual  
Address: [REDACTED]  
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Submitted on: 3/19/2010

**Comments:**

Please find attached a copy of a proposal relating to an Obama Presidential Library in Hawaii



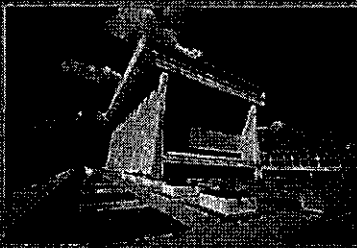
## A Hawai'i Home for the Obama Presidential Library and Museum

The University of Hawai'i invites you to join in a visionary endeavor: bidding to locate Barack Obama's presidential library and museum in Honolulu. As Obama's home state, Hawai'i is the logical place to house and nurture the president's legacy. The islands' global orientation, multicultural mosaic, robust visitor industry, and unrivaled natural beauty—combined with the historic importance of Obama's presidency—will make this the most dynamic of the country's presidential libraries. Bringing this world-class cultural institution home will also provide numerous benefits to the people of Hawai'i, spurring economic development, revitalizing island architecture, attracting top researchers, and providing educational opportunities for our children. The competition will be intense, but as Obama's remarkable campaign proved, bold dreams can change the future.

### Presidential Libraries and Museums

Presidential libraries and museums rank among the country's historical treasures. Managed by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), they preserve documents, records, and artifacts of U.S. presidents and make them accessible to the public. There are currently thirteen libraries in the system. Most of them include not merely preservation and research space but also museums, conference facilities, and university-run think tanks. The Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock, for instance, houses the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service, the local headquarters of the Clinton Foundation, private living quarters for the former first family, a full-feature museum that includes replicas of the Oval Office and Cabinet Room, and a 70,000 square-foot archive that holds 80 million pages of documents, 23 million electronic files, 2 million photographs, and 90,000 artifacts. The complex attracts some 300,000 visitors per year. It cost \$165 million to build (very little of the total invested by the host state and university), and it has catalyzed an estimated \$2.1 billion in job creation and urban development.

According to the precedent begun by Franklin D. Roosevelt, presidential libraries are built largely with private financing (with the outgoing president leading the fundraising), but they are managed in perpetuity by the federal government, often in partnership with a research university. Traditionally, these libraries are located in a president's home state, and the competition among universities and municipalities to house them is often fierce. Bid development typically begins shortly after a president's inauguration and culminates with the president making a final decision on site selection and preliminary design toward the end of his last term. In Obama's case, the University of Chicago has already announced an aggressive effort, and other institutions are likely to follow.



Yes We Can

# Obama Presidential Library Proposal



## Benefits to Hawai'i

If President Obama selects Honolulu as the site for his presidential library and museum, the project will bring numerous benefits to the city and state. They include:

- **A massive infusion of capital**, including federal spending through NARA and private funds from around the world. Remarkably, very little of the money has to come from Hawai'i taxpayers, UH, or even local donors. The George W. Bush Presidential Center in Dallas, for example, will cost more than \$250 million, but Southern Methodist University is putting up only the land; the former president's private foundation and the federal government are covering the full construction and management costs. In short, presidential libraries carry a pronounced multiplier effect; they create jobs and stimulate the local economy while requiring only a modest investment of local resources.
- **The addition of a world-class institution to Hawai'i's cultural landscape.** Hawai'i boasts a beloved collection of museums and cultural sites, yet with the exception of Pearl Harbor, few of them draw tourists to the islands on their own. A state-of-the-art facility devoted to understanding a transformational president of global stature, however, will attract new visitors from throughout the world and provide a long-term boost to Hawai'i's leading industry.
- **The construction of a landmark building that will redefine Honolulu's skyline and inspire civic pride.** As a relatively new metropolis, Honolulu is not known for its architecture, but building a presidential center provides the opportunity to change that. If Diamond Head constitutes the city's most recognizable natural feature, the Obama Presidential Center (OPC) can become Honolulu's iconic edifice. It can define and brand the city, like the Sydney Opera House, the Guggenheim in Bilbao, or the Petronas Towers of Kuala Lumpur.
- **The creation of a top-notch policy institute that will burnish UH's reputation and help civic and community leaders meet tomorrow's challenges.** Inspired by Obama's change-oriented administration, the Center will set a new standard for community-based policy research and advocacy. Tackling problems from the ground up and fostering collaboration among community organizers, scholars, and political leaders, the center will advance inquiry and innovation around issues of core importance to the president, including education, environment, health care, human rights, indigenous rights, democratization, economic justice, and Asia-Pacific security.
- **An inspiration to Hawai'i's students at all levels.** Born and educated on O'ahu, Barack Obama already serves as a role model for Hawai'i youth. Bringing his archives and artifacts home will carry this inspiration forward, providing countless educational opportunities for Hawai'i's young people, from school field trips to summer internships to advanced research projects.



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- **The reinforcement of Hawai'i as a nexus of diplomacy.** With its unique location and constellation of globally-oriented institutions—namely, UH, the East-West Center, and the Pacific Command—Hawai'i already serves as an essential gathering place between Asia and the Americas. With its conference facilities, education programs, public-policy center, and a substantial endowment, the OPC will augment the islands' international importance, hosting dynamic events and bringing in a succession of notable speakers, from climate justice advocates to heads of state. It will help make Honolulu the Geneva of the Pacific.

### Hawai'i's Advantages

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Hawai'i has several advantages as a site for the Obama Presidential Center:

- In accord with UH's motto, "Maluna a'e o nā lāhui a pau ke ola ke kanaka" —"Above all nations is humanity"—siting the OPC in Hawai'i will signal a global outlook and advance the president's efforts to renew America's standing. Built on the country's westernmost shore, perhaps with commanding ocean views, Hawai'i's OPC will look outward rather than inward. It will suggest, as President Obama noted in his inaugural address, that the age of American parochialism has passed, that "the world has changed, and we must change with it." It will reaffirm America's status as a "Pacific nation," as the president put it at the 2009 APEC summit, and it will point the country toward the future rather than the past.
- Hawai'i's multicultural population and longstanding commitment to democratic pluralism reinforces the president's transcendence of out-dated racial polarization. In his Philadelphia address on race, Barack Obama called for Americans to move beyond the "racial stalemate we've been stuck in for years" and to recognize that "out of many, we are truly one." With its ethic of aloha and no-majority demographics that anticipate the future of the country, Hawai'i embodies this unifying vision more than any other state. It encourages Americans not to wallow in the divisions of the past but to come together to meet this century's challenges.
- The state's strong tourism industry will ensure an elevated long-term visitor count. In recent years, many presidential libraries have experienced declining attendance. The fact that Honolulu has roughly 1 million residents and that the state annually attracts some 7 million visitors suggests, however, that Hawai'i will be able to generate higher attendance figures than any other presidential library. Along with beaches and Pearl Harbor, the OPC will become a premier attraction.
- The OPC will provide the Obamas a home away from home. If, as expected, the Obama family resettles in Chicago after leaving Washington, the OPC can facilitate their regular visits to the islands, by including secure, spacious, and architecturally innovative living, office, and conference facilities for the president, his family, and his staff. As with the Clintons' executive suite in Little Rock, the OPC can offer housing and workspace appropriate to a former president, allowing the first family to carry on their responsibilities without the headaches and expense of maintaining two personal residences.



Yes We Can



- **Hawai'i is Obama's 'ohana.** As his birthplace, Hawai'i has deeper ties to the president and his family than any other location. From his parents' first meeting at the East-West Center to the education of his grandmother, mother, sister, and brother-in-law at UH to his own graduation from Punahou, Hawai'i is bound up with almost every chapter of what Obama calls his unlikely personal story. As Michelle Obama has observed, "You can't really understand Barack until you understand Hawai'i."
- **Hawai'i will provide a nurturing home for Obama's legacy.** As the state that voted for Obama in higher percentages than any other (76 percent in the caucuses, 72 percent in the general election), Hawai'i's people and policymakers will enthusiastically support the OPC from conception to construction and beyond.

### Steps Forward

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In order to persuade President Obama that Hawai'i will provide the best home for his library and museum, we will have to develop a compelling, detailed proposal and launch an aggressive, multifaceted campaign to promote it, not unlike the state's successful bid to host the 2011 APEC conference. As Obama already has been in office for more than a year, the effort should begin immediately, with separate committees conducting research and planning in five major areas:

- **Fundraising:** While the OPC will be built with federal and private funds raised by the president, the bid itself will require a budget of approximately \$2.5 million dollars. In order to marshal the resources necessary to hire consultants, conduct research, fund travel, and hire a small staff to coordinate events, publicity, and political support, a strategic private fundraising campaign should be launched by the UH Foundation under the leadership of System and UHM administrators. Sources of public or quasi-public funding should also be investigated.
- **Site Selection and Preliminary Design:** Presidential foundations oversee site design after they leave office, but Hawai'i's bid should identify a location that is not simply feasible in terms of size, availability, and infrastructure but so stunning in its natural features that the OPC will become the crown jewel of the presidential library system. Its preliminary architectural plans should aim to create Honolulu's most extraordinary public space. To advance community and sustainability, the site should meet platinum LEED standards and include substantial green space, including a working lo'i and outdoor education and recreation facilities.
- **Policy Center Conception:** While a policy center may be partly funded by the president's foundation, it should be built and managed autonomously by the University of Hawai'i. To carry on Obama's legacy by advancing research and action on issues he cares about, this center, perhaps titled the Obama School of New Community



Yes We Can



# Obama Presidential Library Proposal



Leadership, should operate both as a degree-granting graduate program and a traditional policy institute. It should tackle problems of acute importance by bringing together policymakers, scholars, activists, and students from around the world, and it should take advantage of the university's existing strengths in Asia-Pacific and indigenous studies, for example. The university should expeditiously begin planning for this center, evaluating best practices and innovations, soliciting local political support, and exploring synergies with institutions such as Punahou and the East-West Center.

- **Museum and Archives Development:** A museum and archives committee should study new presidential library guidelines published by NARA and should begin consulting with museum experts and premier cultural institutions around the world to identify cutting-edge practices that will maximize the worldwide availability of presidential materials and provide an engaging, interactive, and inspiring museum experience to visitors of all ages. Because Hawai'i's distance from major population centers will be a comparative disadvantage, our proposal should envision the most electronically accessible presidential library in the system.
- **Political Coordination:** In order to develop a successful proposal, Hawai'i's political, community, and business leaders will have to come together and speak with one voice. In addition, we will have to mobilize local and national support to persuade President Obama that Hawai'i is his best choice. Coordinating a diverse set of stakeholders and inspiring them to action will require a great deal of effort that should begin immediately.

In this effort to host the Obama Presidential Center, Hawai'i has the opportunity to build a world-class cultural institution, bolster our leading industry, invigorate the University of Hawai'i, and honor our president. Given Hawai'i's unique geographical and cultural advantages, we can design and construct the most impressive presidential library and museum in the United States. A successful bid will require vision, cooperation, and determination, but we take inspiration from Obama's remarkable accomplishments despite adversity. When completed, our Obama Presidential Center will do great service to Hawai'i, the nation, and the world.



Yes We Can

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