

Testimony in Support of HCR 50

Regarding a Management Audit of the State Historic Preservation Division

Hearing April 15th, 2010 Rm. 224

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Aloha Chair Hee and Committee Members,

I am writing to support HCR 50 the original language of this bill which authorized an audit of the State Historic Preservation Division. It is a great concern that SHPD has failed its core function to preserve Hawaii's historic sites.

In addition, SHPD mismanagement has contributed to the following:

- 1) Strains on the State Treasury as lawsuits are filed to force the Division to follow its own rules.
- 2) Wasted tax money by having two high salaried administrators run SHPD, due to the director's lack of qualifications in the field.
- 3) A mantra of "no significant impact" and "no further mitigation measures necessary".
- 4) A huge turnover of qualified staff.
- 5) Knowledgeable community members and cultural practitioners effectively pushed from the consultation process.

The recent probe of the Division by the National Park Service is a big step towards improvement and the State should assist with this effort. Desecration of sites at Kawaiha'o Church, Hāwea Heiau Complex and Nau'e Burial Sites could have been avoided if the division had implemented proper oversight. Qualified leadership trained in Hawaiian Archaeology and Cultural Practices is desperately needed.

We all know that poor funding and the lack of qualified staff is challenging. However, many other states face similar economic challenges while still performing due diligence and enforcement. A poor economy does not excuse the division to abdicate its preservation duties in favor of archaeologists handpicked and paid by developers.

We can't afford to have more cases like the Hāwea Heiau Complex. At Hāwea, the Department approved a Preservation Plan prepared without consulting a single group, despite the Native Hawaiian and East Honolulu communities expressing their concern for years to the department. It is time the leadership managing the Division is held accountable to the law and start preserving Hawaii's historic sites.

Mahalo,

Chris Cramer

East Honolulu Historian