

GM 787

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



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March 27, 2012
Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
GM787

Testimony in Support of GM787 nomination of John Richards to the Environmental Council

As Director of the Office of Environmental Quality Control I offer my strong support of John Richards to serve on the Environmental Council.

Mr. Richards is a proven factor on the EC. A rancher from Hawaii County with a diverse background and wide-ranging experience, he is reliable, thoughtful and a valuable contributing member of the EC.

I offer John my sincerest thanks for serving on the Council these past 4 years and my wholehearted and enthusiastic support of his current reappointment. I urge the Committee to vote in the affirmative in support of his confirmation and continuing service on the EC.

Testimony for ENE 3/27/2012 2:50:00 PM GM787

Conference room: 225
Testifier position: Support
Testifier will be present: Yes
Submitted by: Scott Glenn
Organization: Individual
E-mail: scotchglenn@gmail.com
Submitted on: 3/26/2012

Comments:

To the Honorable Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee on Energy and Environment,

Mr. Richards is a valuable member of the Environmental Council. He brings a unique combination of business experience, neighbor island perspective, and pragmatic thoughtfulness to exemption proposals and the general business of the Council. I look forward to the opportunity to continue working with Mr. Richards.

John A. Richards

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14 March 2012

Senator Mike Gabbard
Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
Chair

For: Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

Subject: Qualifications for Service on the Environmental Council (EC)

Discussion:

(1) Given your understanding of the role and responsibilities of a member of the Environmental Council, why do you believe that you are qualified for the position? Please include a brief statement of your skills, expertise, or knowledge that would aid in your decision-making ability as a member of the Environmental Council.

My qualifications to serve on the EC come from a diverse background in both education and work experience. Briefly, I have a BS in Animal Science with a Science option that focuses on hard science and economics. I was a US Army Infantry Officer for 5 ½ year with service in Macedonia, The Czech Republic and Poland. I was the Operations Manager for Kahua Ranch Limited for 12 year and am a Partner in Waimea Water Services LLC.

Without going into great detail all of the positions listed trained me to plan, coordinate and manage the impact of environmental impact and compliance. I have worked in a range of regulatory environments from virtually unregulated third world countries, to highly regulated environments such as Germany and Hawaii. I have managed operations, here in Hawaii, that have needed environmental stewardship for not years, but generations.

The education and experience gives me a perspective and knowledge that allows me to find solutions that facilitate sustained use and management of resources without hampering their value to people and the economy.

(2) What have you accomplished in your previous term on the Environmental Council?

To look at accomplishments it is important to look at the recent history of the EC. The EC has taken a walk in the wilderness. Just prior to my joining the EC, input had submitted publicly regarding the Super Ferry that was not well received. The impact was an icing out of the EC with virtually no communication from the Governors office and less support. In fairness, this was also a time of severe budgetary challenges. It reached a point we could no longer effectively hold meetings and ceased to function. The result was a languishing of rule revisions and exemption lists.

The biggest accomplishment of the members of the EC has been to bring it back to a functional body. There are opinions about its use and value but for sound decisions to be made the EC must do its job and be judged on its shortcomings or merits.

The EC is current with its exemption lists and has begun the rule change proceedings.

(3) What do you hope to accomplish in another term?

Hawaii has a serious problem. The environmental rules have devolved to a point that they are often unclear as to application and requirements. The laws are unpredictable and almost always wind up in litigation on projects of any size. This has resulted in the execution of projects taking decades instead of years or simply chasing investment to friendlier locales.

The Super Ferry is the most glaring example of the condition of the regulatory environment. Regardless if you believe it was a good or bad idea, no business should be able to get a permit, to have it blocked by litigation, to have it legislatively approved, operate for a year and then get shut down. This creates a business environment that is unpredictable and discourages investment. This is not good for business, the environment, nor the people of Hawaii.

I hope I could help bring predictability of regulation in Hawaii. We can encourage investment while protecting our valuable resources if we set clear rules for activities.

(4) Have any possible conflicts of interests arisen during your service on the Environmental Council? How would you overcome any possible conflicts of interest?

The only potential conflict comes from the fact that I do work with companies that generate income from developing and operating systems that utilize environmental resources. I don't believe it is of critical importance as our function and goals of sustainable use and conservation of resources is in line with the purpose of environmental regulation. There is of course a chance projects or companies we work with could come before us but I would recues myself in those instances. As we are not a regulatory body and have little to do directly with approvals I do not foresee a problem.

I look forward to continuing the work to protect the special place that is Hawaii.

Thank You

Sincerely,

John A. Richards