

HB 2251



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF ELECTIONS**

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SCOTT T. NAGO
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

**TESTIMONY OF THE
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER, OFFICE OF ELECTIONS
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND LABOR
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 2251
RELATING TO ELECTIONS**

March 13, 2012

Chair Hee and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 2251. The purpose of this bill is to authorize the county clerk of any county with a population of less than one hundred thousand to mail an absentee ballot to each registered voter of any island of that county not contiguous with the island where the county seat of government is located.

The logistical and administrative issues associated with establishing a polling place on such an island are significant. For example, for the Island of Niihau, these issues include the delivery and return of ballots, voting machines, and associated election materials, in addition to the recruitment of on-island precinct officials to operate the polling place. This bill instead gives the county clerk the ability to give voters in this situation the convenience of an absentee ballot.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 2251.

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TESTIMONY OF
JADE K. FOUNTAIN-TANIGAWA
DEPUTY COUNTY CLERK, COUNTY OF KAUA'I
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND LABOR
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 2251
RELATING TO ELECTIONS
March 13, 2012

Chair Hee and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill No. 2251. The purpose of this bill is to authorize the county clerk of a county with a population of less than one hundred thousand to mail an absentee ballot for each primary, special primary, special, general, and special general election to all properly registered voters of any island of that county that is not contiguous with the island where the county seat of government is located.

HB 2251 will equitably reallocate diminished personnel and fiscal resources to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of delivering voting services. Additionally, HB 2251 is commensurate with the voting publics' growing acceptance and use of non-precinct based voting such as absentee mail voting.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill No. 2251.

JADE K. FOUNTAIN-TANIGAWA
Deputy County Clerk



League of Women Voters of Hawaii

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SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

CLAYTON HEE, CHAIR, MAILE S.L. SHIMABUKURO, V. CHAIR

MARCH 13, 2012, TUES. 10:15 A.M.. CONF. RM. 016

HB 2251, HSC R 772-12 RELATING TO ELECTIONS

TESTIMONY

Marian Wilkins, Member Elections Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii SUPPORTS HB 2251 which would allow a county clerk to conduct a mail election by the residents of an island which is not contiguous to said county.

There is a question, however, about the wording of the bill which seems to indicate that only Kauai county would fit the description of a county with less than 100,000. Maui county, which has two non contiguous populated islands, would not qualify, if we understand the wording correctly. If this is accurate, wouldn't it make sense to also allow the Maui County clerks to have this option?

The ability to send ballots by mail to small populations of residents would alleviate the need to set up polling places with all the accoutrements that would be required, including staffing.

One of the reasons that our League supports voting by mail in general, is the hardship for people to get to the polls during the hours that polls are open. Many people commute long distances to work or work shifts. There is no way for them to get to the polls before 6:00 p.m. and the polls are not open until 7:00 a.m. Most people have to work on election days and, let's be realistic, how many employers would or could let someone leave their place of employment to go vote. And how many self employed people can afford to take the time?

Now that we are allowed to vote by permanent absentee balloting, it is easier for everyone to vote, but many still do not take advantage of this option because they don't know about it,s or remember to request it in time.

Mailing ballots to registered voters solves many of these problems. The League supports extending voting by mail whenever possible when proper safeguards and the necessary mechanism is in place to assure the public that their ballots are secure.

Thank you for your consideration.