



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF ELECTIONS**

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PEARL CITY, HAWAII 96782
www.hawaii.gov/elections

SCOTT T. NAGO
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

**TESTIMONY OF THE
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER, OFFICE OF ELECTIONS
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 198, HD 1
RELATING TO ABSENTEE VOTING**

February 27, 2013

Chair Luke and members of the House Committee on Finance, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 198, HD 1. The purpose of this bill is to provide that applicants for permanent absentee voter status will have their ballots mailed to the mailing address associated with their voter registration, unless the voter specifically requests that the ballots be temporarily mailed to a different address.

In 2011, the Legislature authorized voters to be able to request a permanent absentee voter ballot when registering to vote or separately through a permanent absentee voter ballot application. Act 142, SLH 2011. The 2012 Elections were the first elections to fully utilize permanent absentee voting. From that experience, we have administratively found that voters who have applied for permanent absentee ballot status, who subsequently update their voter registration as a result of moving, sometimes forget to separately update the address that they wish for their absentee ballot to be permanently mailed to, if they want their ballot to be mailed to their new voter registration address, as opposed to the permanent mailing address on file.

Additionally, others may accidentally provide the address of a vacation destination, a college, or a military location, which was meant to be temporary, but they did not realize that the application will result in ballots being mailed permanently to that address, as opposed to for a single election.

Essentially, the application for permanent absentee voter ballot provides that a voter can have ballots mailed to their voter registration mailing address or to a specific address permanently. If a voter writes down a specific address,

absentee ballots will be mailed there permanently until the voter specifically informs election officials that absentee ballots should be mailed to a different address.

Against this backdrop, the bill provides that applicants for permanent absentee voter ballot status will have their ballots permanently mailed to their voter registration mailing address. This means that whenever a voter moves and updates their voter registration mailing address, their mailing address for permanent absentee ballots will also be updated.

In terms of a permanent absentee mail voter, who will temporarily be away from their residence, the bill permits a voter to use the regular absentee ballot application to temporarily authorize the mailing of the voter's ballots to a different address for that calendar year. This allows permanent absentee mail voters to specifically authorize having their ballots mailed to a vacation destination, a college address on the mainland for a student, a military address for someone in the military, or a similarly convenient location, based on the unique circumstances of the voter.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 198, HD 1.



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

COUNTY OF MAUI
200 S. HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.mauicounty.gov/county/clerk

TESTIMONY OF JEFFREY T. KUWADA
COUNTY CLERK, COUNTY OF MAUI
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 198, HD 1
RELATING TO ABSENTEE VOTING
FEBRUARY 27, 2013

Chair Luke and members of the House Committee on Finance, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill No. 198, HD 1. The purpose of this bill is to require the absentee ballot for a voter requesting permanent absentee status to be mailed to the mailing address contained on the voter's most recently completed affidavit on application for voter registration, unless the voter submits a written authorization to temporarily mail an absentee ballot to a different address.

The Office of the County Clerk, County of Maui, supports House Bill No. 198, HD 1.

The purpose of the permanent absentee application is to allow voters to remain on the absentee mail list for each election without having to re-apply every year, provided they follow certain conditions. However, after the first full election cycle of permanent absentee voting, we found that voters were updating their voter registration information (by submitting an affidavit on application for voter registration), but not their permanent absentee record. This resulted in absentee ballots being returned to our office as undeliverable.

Allowing permanent absentee voters to have their ballot mailed to the mailing address on their most recently completed affidavit on application for voter registration will ensure that their permanent absentee record is also updated. House Bill No. 198 will reduce the number of undeliverable absentee mail ballots.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 198, HD 1.

RICKY R. WATANABE
County Clerk

Telephone: (808) 241-4800
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JADE K. FOUNTAIN-TANIGAWA
Deputy County Clerk

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**ELECTIONS DIVISION
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK**
4386 RICE STREET, SUITE 101
LIHU'E, KAUA'I, HAWAI'I 96766-1819

**TESTIMONY OF RICKY R. WATANABE
COUNTY CLERK, COUNTY OF KAUA'I
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 198, HD 1
RELATING TO ABSENTEE VOTING
February 27, 2013**

Chair Luke and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 198 HD 1. The purpose of this bill is to require the absentee ballot for a voter requesting permanent absentee status to be mailed to the mailing address contained on the voter's most recently completed affidavit on application for voter registration, unless the voter submits a temporary mailing authorization for the absentee ballot to be mailed to a different address.

Permanent absentee ballot (hereinafter "PAB") voters are presently required to maintain current information in two (2) separate records, a voter registration record and a permanent absentee record. PABs are mailed to the mailing address in the permanent absentee record. Administratively, election officials have attempted to simplify the voter registration and PAB application (and re-application) process by creating a single form containing separate sections for each process.

However, problems arise when PAB voters update their voter registration information but not their permanent absentee information. In this situation, since the PAB is being mailed to an old address and because it is not capable of being forwarded, the U.S. Postal Service will eventually return the PAB to the respective County Elections Division.

The undeliverable PAB adversely affects voters and election operations in a number of ways. Voters are inconvenienced by the process required to obtain a replacement ballot; County operations are strained by the extensive voter follow-up required to provide the PAB voter a replacement ballot; and polling place officials are required to complete a fairly complicated procedure for each PAB voter who fails to receive a ballot but shows up at the polls on Election Day.

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Testimony of Ricky R. Watanabe
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House Bill No. 198, HD 1 will significantly improve and simplify the application and re-application process for the vast majority of PAB voters who already authorize their ballots to be mailed to the mailing address in their registration records.

Additionally, House Bill No. 198, HD 1 will reduce the number of undeliverable PABs and its adverse impact on voters and election operations.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 198, HD 1.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ricky R. Watanabe", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

RICKY R. WATANABE
County Clerk

FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, February 25, 2013 12:37 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: inunyabus@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB198 on Feb 27, 2013 11:30AM

HB198

Submitted on: 2/25/2013

Testimony for FIN on Feb 27, 2013 11:30AM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Elaine D.	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments: HB198 This is dangerous. The permanent absentee voter is especially ridiculous. If they are permanently absent, chances are they don't live here anymore and you might as well just open up Hawaii's Election to all states. Any reference to PERMANENT absentee voting should be deleted. (e) When a registered voter requests an absentee ballot, the voter also may [include an additional] request to receive absentee ballots permanently. After receiving a request for permanent absentee voter status, the clerk shall mail to the voter who requested permanent absentee voter status an absentee ballot for all subsequent elections conducted in that precinct. A permanent absentee voter shall be responsible for providing written authorization to the clerk to temporarily mail a ballot to an address different from that listed on the voter's most recently completed affidavit on application for voter registration. Haven't you heard of mailbox services that provide physical addresses? This way someone can be out of the state, country or not even reside here. In many by expanding the absentee voting in the ways proposed throughout this bill, you are opening it up for abuse. Incredible.

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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