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CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF ELECTIONS**

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

January 31, 2013

Chair Rhoads and members of the House Committee on Judiciary, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 198. 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 order to accommodate voters who may wish to have their ballots mailed temporarily to a specific location, the bill provides the voter the option to temporarily authorize, for the calendar year, that all absentee ballots be mailed to a specific address other than their voter registration mailing address. This allows voters to still have the option, on an annual basis, 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.

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
LĪHU'Ē, KAUA'I, HAWAI'I 96766-1819

**TESTIMONY OF RICKY R. WATANABE
COUNTY CLERK, COUNTY OF KAUA'I
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 198
RELATING TO ELECTIONS
January 31, 2013**

Chair Rhoads and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 198. 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 it is not capable of being forwarded, the U.S. Postal Service will eventually return it 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.

House Bill No. 198
Testimony of Ricky R. Watanabe
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House Bill No. 198 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 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.

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

RICKY R. WATANABE
County Clerk



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

COUNTY OF MAUI
200 S. HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
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TESTIMONY OF JEFFREY T. KUWADA
COUNTY CLERK, COUNTY OF MAUI
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 198
RELATING TO ABSENTEE VOTING

January 31, 2013

Chair Rhoads and members of the House Committee on Judiciary, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill No. 198. 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.

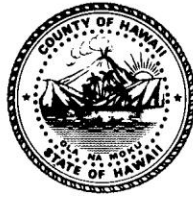
The Office of the County Clerk, County of Maui, supports House Bill No. 198.

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.

STEWART MAEDA
County Clerk



MAILE DAVID
Deputy County Clerk

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

Elections Division

County of Hawaii

Hawaii County Building

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TESTIMONY OF STEWART MAEDA
COUNTY CLERK, COUNTY OF HAWAI'I
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 198
RELATING TO ELECTIONS
January 31, 2013

Chair Rhoads and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 198. The purpose of this bill is to require the absentee ballot for a voter requesting permanent absentee status to be mailed to the current 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 purpose of the permanent absentee application is to allow voters to remain on the absentee mail list without having to re-apply every election year. Presently a permanent absentee ballot voter is required to maintain current information in two separate records, a voter registration record and a permanent absentee record. Permanent absentee ballots are mailed to the mailing address on the permanent absentee record.

However we have found that permanent absentee voters were updating their voter registration record, but not their permanent absentee record. In this situation, the absentee ballot were being returned to our office as undeliverable.

House Bill No. 198 will allow permanent absentee voter's to have their ballot mailed to the mailing address on their most recently completed affidavit on application for voter registration (the voter registration record). This will significantly improve and simplify the application and re-application process for a majority of permanent absentee voters.

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



League of Women Voters of Hawaii

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JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Rep. Karl Rhoads, Chair and Rep. Sharon E. Har, Vice-Chair

Thursday, January 31, 2013, 2:05 p.m. Conference Room 325

HB198, RELATING TO ABSENTEE VOTING

REVISED TESTIMONY

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

Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Har and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii supports HB198 which clarifies where an absentee ballot for a permanent absentee voter is to be mailed. In most cases this is straightforward - the absentee ballot will be mailed to the mailing address on the voter's most recently completed affidavit application for voter registration.

But it is our understanding that if absentee ballots are returned to elections officials by the U.S. Post Office for any reason, it is not possible for officials to forward this ballot to an address different than that from the voter's official address of record maintained by elections officials, even if the voter has provided a temporary forwarding address to the U.S. Post Office.

Sometimes a permanent absentee voter may be temporarily away from the address provided by the voter on their most recent affidavit for voter registration. This could occur either at the time a voter **first** completes an affidavit application for permanent absentee status, or a temporary change could occur **after** a voter has permanent absentee status. Our interpretation is that Section 15 (4), h of this measure already addresses temporary mailing address changes for those who already have permanent absentee status, and that no change is needed in this procedure.

This bill proposes mailing instructions for situations where the voter is completing an initial affidavit application for permanent status, knowing they will be at a temporary address when absentee ballots will be mailed. The bill provides that when this occurs, the voter must complete a temporary mailing authorization, permitting elections authorities to mail the absentee ballot to the temporary address provided by the voter for all elections in the year the authorization is received. Thereafter, the absentee



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ballot for the permanent absentee voter would be mailed to the address listed on the voter's most recently completed affidavit application for voter registration.

This measure would avoid frustrating applicants for permanent absentee voting who know they will be temporarily away from home when their ballot is delivered and who wish to receive a ballot at their temporary address. It is an important step in making Hawaii's permanent absentee voting procedures more clear, and is particularly important as we move forward with more widespread vote-by-mail approaches. Making the changes bill provides added service for voters.

We urge you to pass this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.