



***League of Women Voters of Hawaii***

49 South Hotel Street, Room 314 | Honolulu, HI 96813

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HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair, Sen. Sharon E. Har, Vice-Chair  
Thursday, January 31, 2013, 2:05 p.m., Room 325

HB269, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of the State of Hawaii Relating to Residency Requirements for Members of the Legislature

TESTIMONY

Jean Aoki, Legislative Committee Member, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Har and Committee Members:

**The League of Women Voters of Hawaii opposes HB269** which suggests an increase from 3 to 5 years as the minimum time candidates must reside in this State to serve in the State House of Representatives and State Senate.

We believe that a 3-year residency requirement is sufficient time for anyone interested in community improvements and state issues to actively get involved in organizations, community activities and research to qualify for service in the Senate and the House. Some people may feel they need more time and they may wisely defer running for office until they feel prepared. But for those who are eager to serve and feel they qualify, they should be allowed to let the voters judge their readiness.

We support the requirement for candidates to be residents of the district from which they seek to be elected for not less than twelve consecutive months prior to the next succeeding general election, especially since the law makes exceptions for displacements caused by redistricting after the national census. One should feel comfortably a member of the community, sharing the community's dreams and hopes for making the community and the state a better place for themselves and their children, before daring to represent it at the legislature.

For voting, a residency requirement of a year is still in our state constitution in Article II, Section 1 because voters have refused to remove it in spite of the fact that it is against our federal constitution and cannot be recognized. Constitutional provisions governing elections and even candidacies seem not to be easily changed even when they are declared unconstitutional and we should be careful when we amend constitutional provisions that we have good reason to do so. This bill does not provide the rationale for that need.



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We urge you to leave the current 3-year state residency requirement as is, and to amend the section on a one-year district residency qualification for voting. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



*46-063 Emepela Pl. #U101 Kaneohe, HI 96744 · (808) 679-7454 · Kris Coffield · Co-founder/Legislative Director*

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**TESTIMONY FOR HOUSE BILL 269, PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE  
CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF HAWAII RELATING TO RESIDENCY  
REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE**

**House Committee on Judiciary  
Hon. Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Hon. Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair**

**Thursday January 31, 2013, 2:05 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 325**

Honorable Chair Rhoads and committee members:

I am Kris Coffield, representing the IMUAlliance, a nonpartisan political advocacy organization that currently boasts over 150 local members. On behalf of our members, we offer this testimony in opposition to HB 269, proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Hawaii relating to residency requirements for the members of the legislature.

While we applaud attempts to guarantee legislative representation for Hawaii residents and safeguard the state's electoral processes, we are concerned that this amendment would have unintended consequences that undermine its purpose. In the 2012 general election, only 60 percent of the state's Senate races (15 out of 25) were contested, with a mere 62.7 percent House races (32 out of 51) being contested. Should the constitutional amendment proposed by this bill be effectuated, fewer people will be eligible to run for public office. We feel that three years is enough time to become familiar with the values, culture, and politics of Hawaii to make a difference in one's community, if one feels compelled to act, and we firmly believe that lawmakers should incentivize greater electoral participation, given the state's meager number of prospective candidates.

Additionally, IMUAlliance boasts a significant number of college-age members, many of whom would like to enter public service at some point, or at least attempt to do so. For our outer-island members who attend UH-Manoa, however, a continuous one-year residency requirement prior to seeking public office would delay candidacy at a time when these individuals are eager to put their education and energy to use (or, conversely, necessitate that these students run for, and subsequently remain residents of, the greater Manoa community, since their residency often changes to Manoa as they complete their degrees). Since Hawaii's high cost of living necessitates

an income (one might find it difficult to spend a year preparing for candidacy, sans full-time employment, and college graduates typically earn less than their tenured and vested colleagues), we feel that this requirement disproportionately favors an older, more professionally established, and wealthier candidate pool.

Consider, as an example, the case of Rep. Kaniela Ing. Elected last year to represent District 11 in the State House, Ing grew up in and around Kihei, the heart of his constituency. After completing his B.A. in psychology, in 2010, and M.P.A., in 2012, from UH-Manoa, Ing opted to use his newly minted public administration skills to benefit the community in which he spent much of his youth. His election over Republican incumbent George Fontaine was largely seen as an improbable upset, especially for someone aged 23-years-old (at the time of the election). Since entering the State Legislature, Ing has co-sponsored dozens of measures relating to issues as varied as voter registration to vocational licensing for veterans to procurement savings. Yet, according to the terms of the proposed amendment, Ing's energy and ideas would have been put on pause for a year (and actually several years, when one considers the election cycle lag), denying his electorate the representation that, according to their votes, they clearly favor. Ing likely would have been forced to find another means of supporting himself during the interim, the responsibilities of which may have ultimately led him away from local politics.

Don't deny Hawaii's future leaders the opportunity to participate in our state's elections. We need to foster greater political action among Hawaii's younger generations, not stage barriers to their engagement. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in opposition to of this bill.

Sincerely,  
Kris Coffield  
*Legislative Director*  
IMUAlliance