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Opening Day Speech for the 2013 Legislative Session by the House Minority Leader

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the privilege of addressing this chamber, filled with so many of our State's most distinguished leaders of the past, present, and future. Today, I am also honored to have the opportunity to speak to the people, the heart of Hawaii.

People all across the country are speaking out and asking for common sense leaders who will work to find common ground. We, here in Hawaii, are answering this call...starting today.

With the cost of living rising, the effect of federal spending cuts uncertain, and the burden of unfunded liabilities looming large, we must have a common purpose. The improvement of the lives of all our people is that common purpose.

This Minority Caucus recognizes that we have a duty as elected Representatives to work constructively and collaboratively in finding solutions and achieving results that reflect the will of the people. Collective problems require collective solutions. Thus, where common ground and common cause can be found, your Minority Caucus will work hard to find it. However, where we must disagree, we...will...respectfully dissent.

The upcoming session affords us the opportunity to answer the public's call to action. The Minority Caucus will advocate for legislation that addresses:

- Quality of Life Improvements, including greater protections for children (particularly in the school setting) and the elderly, and better addressing the health and well-being of veterans.
- Opportunity for All, by guarding against cost of living increases on our most vulnerable populations and promoting small businesses.
- Accountability and Transparency in Government, by reforming the local election process, addressing the PLDC , and encouraging greater public input in the legislative process.

On these issues, where common ground and common cause can be found, we will work hard to find it.

On behalf of the Minority Caucus, I would like to thank and honor Speaker Say for his historic service to the state as Speaker of the House of Representatives. I would also like to wish Speaker Souki well as he leads our body in this next chapter of the Legislature's history.

Change brings a newness and a different perspective. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Minority Caucus before you today.

Four of our seven members are age 32 or younger, and in this next generation of minority members, there is a connection to much of Hawaii's story.

In Minority Floor Leader Beth Fukumoto, we have a granddaughter of a labor leader, who led the union that ultimately became the New York State AFL-CIO.

...a fourth generation farmer in Lauren Kealohilani Cheape, whose great-grandfather started Peterson's Upland Farm in Wahiawa in 1910.

...a combat veteran who served in Operation Enduring Freedom in Richard Lee Fale, who grew up in the Kingdom of Tonga.

...and a former White House staffer whose great-grandparents immigrated to Hawaii from Okinawa as plantation laborers in your Minority Leader.

Youth brings energy and new ideas to the table, but it needs a strong foundation. Our caucus' foundation has been built by a champion of small business and an international diplomat, a tireless environmental advocate, a veteran fighting hard for the benefit of other veterans, and the generations of leaders who came before us.

The Minority Caucus' diversity is reflective of the broader diversity that exists within our House of Representatives. It is this diversity, coupled with a common purpose, which enables us as public servants to effectively answer the public's call to action.

This call resonates across ideological and geographic lines. Starting today, recognizing common cause and finding common ground, we are ALL answering the call. Mahalo and best wishes for a successful 2013 legislative session. Aloha!