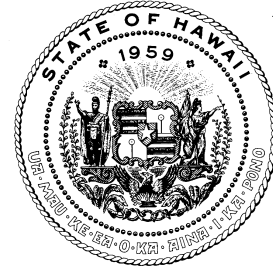


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PRESS RELEASE

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Opening Day Remarks – 27th State Legislature

By **State Senator Sam Slom** (R - 9 O'ahu) Senate Minority Leader

Senate President **Kim**, Governor **Abercrombie**, distinguished guests and *overburdened taxpayers* of Hawaii, on behalf of the *entire* Senate Minority, ***Aloha!***

Thank **God**, this body will once again have daily prayer, because if ever there was a time elected officials should call on a higher authority for guidance, it is now.

"WE, the People." That is the beginning of both the United States and Hawaii Constitutions and we need to remind ourselves, as elected officials, of the significance of these words. These are serious times requiring our best abilities and swift action.

It seems many of our residents, perhaps too many, believe we have lost our way and forgotten those limiting words as government becomes more dominant in our daily lives. There are negative consequences: a divided population, voter apathy, less confidence in us as elected officials and more social and financial problems. People in Hawaii are tired of being pushed around while told everything is fine. They know better.

Last month, the national emphasis was on the so-called federal "fiscal cliff," involving excessive government taxation, spending, and debt. Actually, we fell off that cliff months ago. In Hawaii, more accurately we face the "*financial Pali*," as government attempts to take away more freedoms and income from its citizens.

Forbes Magazine describes Hawaii as one of 10 "**Death Spiral States**." Forbes and other watchdog organizations cite over taxation and rising tax burdens, increased state debt, massive unfunded liabilities, and an exodus of private employers, as dangerous for investors.

Nothing has really been resolved on the federal level, and while both sides continue to fight over the debt ceiling, fewer Americans are tuning in because they believe their elected officials are not accountable or transparent, and don't know where to turn.

A nation and a state without accountability and lack of consequences set a dangerous precedent. We need meaningful change and must provide consequences for bad behavior and poor performance in government.

Last year, we tried to run roughshod over established environmental hearings procedures by granting government special and favorable fast track powers. We tried to fool the public into believing that initiatives such as the Public Land Development Corporation were good for them. PLDC should be repealed, not amended.

We don't speak honestly to our constituents about the true costs and impact of major projects our state had undertaken like the heavy steel rail on O'ahu, the \$2 billion undersea electric cable, wind turbines covering neighbor Island landscapes so that they might power O'ahu, and the costs associated with contract overages, add-ons, missing money and wasted funds. We must respect taxpayers enough to be truthful.

During Senate investigations of Hawaii's only taxpayer supported state university—hearings demanded *not* by government officials but by concerned taxpayers and alumni who put their trust in the Senate—we discovered our excellent university is being run by bureaucrats who have not been responsible with taxpayer funds.

The problems go far beyond the \$200,000 lost in the "*Stevie Wonder Concert Blunder.*" The UH Administration showers high salaries and enviable perks on administrators while lacking oversight of its hoards of public relations personnel, incompetent attorneys and old boys.

At our University, there is high cost and low achievement from our administration. What are the consequences so far? *Nothing.* Those involved with the Wonder Blunder and other careless spending still hold power and are paid well. They hope we will forget. We must not. There must be consequences for their actions.

Our Office of Elections is charged with only one duty every two years: organizing and holding fair, efficient and affordable elections for every voter. They booted it, not just last year, but in previous years. Not to print and distribute enough ballots thereby denying a citizen's right to vote—an easy enough task—is **criminal** and should be punished, but instead, in Hawaii tradition, the same people continue in office. This must be changed. They need to be replaced.

Our judiciary has undergone a new initiative but problems still exist. Preference still appears for criminals and not restitution for victims, especially children.

Hawaii's State Department of Health has badly mismanaged state recycling and several other programs they are responsible for. It's not just me saying this; it is the Legislative Auditor, yet we do nothing to stop these practices.

As I predicted previously, Hawaii's outlays for welfare and social services would exceed annual expenditures for government education. Late last year, that became a fact. Hawaii spends more on welfare and other social service programs than we do on educating our children. Yes, there are people in need, but we must ensure we are *not* supporting those who *choose* not to work or be financially responsible. Leading the Nation in food stamps, and among the top for the homeless, are *not* badges of honor.

Our proposed new state budget would increase spending over the next two years by 8% and 11%, respectively, though there is not economic growth to support this increase in government. Many are in denial about the consequences of continued spending growth. The Senate Minority again will develop and put online, an alternative approach to the budget. Ineffective programs and personnel must be jettisoned.

There is a new, expensive, taxpayer subsidized proposal to put our 4 year olds in government schools. The \$30 million Early Education program is widely supported by politicians, non-profits that will gain financially, unions, and a well funded lobbying group. The proponents ultimately want the state to pay for care for children beginning in their infancy, and starting at age 4 is just the beginning. I oppose this further intervention by a government that has not been able to provide even an average education with existing programs and billions of annual subsidies in the government schools. We would not be preparing these children to “succeed,” only to start earlier in the government bureaucracy.

Compulsory public unions in Hawaii flaunt their power and are out of control. The HGEA seized a “most favored nation clause,” guaranteeing them every possible unearned benefit that is bitterly unfair and burdensome to Hawaii taxpayers.

The United Public Workers refused to take a 5% pay cut the same as all other state workers—without any consequence—and are now being rewarded by binding arbitration with a 6% raise. I for one, will strongly oppose an \$8 million so-called “*emergency*” appropriation to reward the UPW, and call on my colleagues to stand up also.

The Hawaii State Teachers Association, which signed a contract agreeing to drug testing and other requirements during the previous Administration, refused to comply and there were no consequences. Now they too want more money and benefits. For our *keiki*? It’s *not* about the children; it is about money and power.

Senate President, you previously called attention to, and presided over, an investigation of unwarranted and costly public employee overtime. The issue has not gone away and in some cases it, and the spiked income pensions overtime allows, is more rampant. Whistleblowers and good, hardworking state and county employees come to me seeking to end bad practices. Many times, their supervisors fail them. We need to end these practices and support hard working employees while weeding out the others.

Our attention in the first days of the 27th Legislature will not be on providing consequences for poor behavior and performance. More likely, we’ll light up the debate on marijuana, roll the dice on gambling, and try to make it easier to die by suicide, after escaping abortion. On a side note, we should do everything possible to help free our neighbor, **Roger Christie**, from unjust federal imprisonment and loss of civil liberties on the grounds that he is a “dangerous criminal” because of his marijuana position.

We need to focus on the priority items in our community, especially our economy. Hawaii’s economy has *not* turned around. The Visitor Industry single handedly is propping up our dismal performance. But if we adjust current record-breaking arrival and expenditure data, we are looking at the same visitor levels as occurred in the 1980s.

Construction, retailing, wholesaling and manufacturing are all doing poorly, no matter what some pundits would like you to believe. Just talk to our people in those industries to learn the truth. Then, do everything to improve our business climate.

The loss of our very special Senior Senator, **Daniel Inouye**, in December, has enormous consequences – social, political and fiscal. He is already missed. His absence does allow for political changes and more independence; His legendary power will be fought over. The estimated \$450 million he brought to this economy annually, and his political and fiscal clout, are gone. Hawaii had many years to prepare for this impact but we didn't. We need to search for other private market economic alternatives to boost our economy, not for a single politician to fill this void.

Hawaii could attract many new employers who provide jobs and tax revenue if we listened to those in our business community and repaired our business climate. Instead, Hawaii government continues to be hostile to business. The recent loss of the Tesoro Refinery and regular closure of bench mark businesses are just symptoms of a government that rewards its own incompetence and risky government "investments" of public money, while punishing hard working private risk takers.

We need to look objectively at states like Wisconsin, Michigan and 22 others, to debate "Right to Work" legislation, not to punish compulsory unions, but to incentivize all workers, and allow them to choose whether or not to join a union and pay dues. It is the right thing to do and the right time to do it.

And by the way, wouldn't it be wonderful if legislators could always act at the same speed to produce good legislation and dismiss bad laws as the Governor did when appointing Lt. Governor Schatz as Senator, a new Lt. Governor, and Senators and Representatives? We must act quickly for the people; not just a Political Party.

In Hawaii, we have *not* done our best on behalf of Hawaii's people. We can and must do better. I believe in an even greater Hawaii with more choices and opportunities for all of our residents. We have it in our power to make it so. Our people and culture are our greatest resources. They are counting on us. We must not fail them.

On behalf of the Senate Minority, I pledge our efforts to support good legislation regardless of who introduces it; to examine and report honestly on the impact of all bills; to work towards ending Legislative exemptions for laws we pass on others and to end counter-productive practices, such as "gut and replace" bills, which lack transparency.

We celebrate our individual God-given liberty and our ability to change for the better. Our goal should not just be a "New Day," but instead, **a better day**. This is not a partisan issue. We can navigate a different course. We can make that happen by a vision of what Hawaii can be. For, We, The People. Let's begin today.

Aloha and Mahalo, God Bless Hawaii, our armed forces men and women and the United States of America.