



The Senate

STATE CAPITOL
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Senate Uses Technology to Connect with Neighbor Island Constituents

Honolulu – Beginning this legislative session, neighbor island constituents will have the chance to testify at a Senate hearing *without physically* being there. By using the Hawaii State Senate’s new Neighbor Island Video Conferencing Program, constituents on the neighbor islands will be able to participate in the legislative process and have their voices heard without traveling to Oahu.

“This pilot project is intended to afford neighbor island individuals the opportunity to actively participate in formulating new legislation, while avoiding travel and related expenses associated with testifying at a Senate committee hearing,” said Senate President Donna Mercado Kim. “At the same time, the Senate will benefit from State, County, and community input and discussion that previously may have been missing.”

The Hawaii State Senate will launch its Neighbor Island Videoconferencing Pilot Program with the Senate Committee on Education on **Friday, January 25, in Room 414 of the State Capitol at 2 p.m.**

The Senate Committee on Education will demonstrate and introduce this new concept during its informational briefing to discuss the progress of the state’s Race to the Top grant and ESEA flexibility application with a live testimonial from Keaau Elementary School Principal Chad Farias on the Big Island via videoconference.

“Our committee contemplates issues that impact communities statewide and video conferencing allows us to ensure that critical stakeholders like parents, students, educators and community leaders can share their thoughts with us on important policy matters we are considering,” said Senator Jill Tokuda, chair of the Senate Committee on Education. “We encourage everyone to actively engage with us in this pilot project, and exercise your right and responsibility to be involved in the legislative process.”

In its inaugural year, the Neighbor Island Video Conferencing Program is being piloted by the Senate Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Technology and the Arts. Along with neighbor

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island residents, State or County departments based on a neighbor island may participate in this project. Hearing notices for the pilot project hearings will indicate that videoconferencing testimony will be allowed and contain a link to instructions for the public on how to participate. Because this is a pilot project, there are some limitations to how many individuals are able to participate. Following the completion of the Legislative Session, the project will be evaluated.

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