



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF ELECTIONS**

802 LEHUA AVENUE
PEARL CITY, HAWAII 96782
elections.hawaii.gov

SCOTT T. NAGO
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

TESTIMONY OF THE
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER, OFFICE OF ELECTIONS
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 1653, HD 1
RELATING TO ELECTIONS

February 25, 2016

Chair Luke and members of the House Committee on Finance, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 1653, HD 1. The purpose of this bill is to expand the procedures used for absentee voting and to transition all voters to permanent absentee status by 2022.

Currently, our election model consists of two parts, absentee and election day. No excuse absentee voting was implemented to supplement election day polling places and modernize voting. In the past, absentee voting accounted for less than 20 percent of voter turnout, with the vast majority of voters continuing to vote at their polling place. However, in recent years, more voters are choosing to cast their ballot prior to election day. As such, we believe it would be more efficient to focus our resources on absentee voting, with a significantly smaller election day presence limited to voters obtaining a replacement mail ballot package, or voting on a direct recording electronic voting machine.

This bill proposes to transition voters to permanent absentee status on a county by county basis. The voters of the County of Kauai would transition to all-mail in 2018, followed by the voters of the County of Hawaii and County of Maui in 2020, and finally the City and County of Honolulu in 2022. The bill also establishes absentee polling places to be open on election day in addition to absentee walk locations.

We support the implementation of all-mail over three election cycles, as it allows election officials to determine in a methodical manner issues that need to be addressed, and how implementation can be improved going forward. All-mail jurisdictions, such as Oregon and Washington, followed a similar county by county transition from polling places to all-mail systems.

The bill revises the division of responsibilities and expenses between the state and the counties. The counties will continue to be responsible for voter registration, absentee voting, and the mailing and receipt of ballots, while the state will be responsible for the printing and counting of ballots. As for election expenses, they will be split between the state and counties, except for voter registration, which will continue to be an expense of the counties.

As the processing and counting of absentee mail ballots is a time consuming process that currently only occurs on election day, the bill properly recognizes the need to move toward processing and counting ballots in advance of election day.

We are concerned with proposed section 9 of the bill which provides an additional five business days after an election for a voter to sign their ballot or otherwise cure a deficiency in their ballot. We would note that five business days after the Primary Election works out to nine calendar days, due to the subsequent non-business days of Sunday, Statehood Day, Saturday, and Sunday. This is inconsistent with the concept of prompt finality and closure when it comes to our elections.

Finally, we would request clarification in the bill as to whether the identity of voters who are to be contacted by the county clerks to correct their ballots may be shared with the public, political parties, or candidates who may wish to contact such voters to correct their ballot or if the information is only to be known by the county clerk and the voter.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 1653, HD 1.

JADE K. FOUNTAIN-TANIGAWA
County Clerk

Telephone: (808) 241-4800
TTY: (808) 241-5116



SCOTT K. SATO
Deputy County Clerk

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**ELECTIONS DIVISION
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK
4386 RICE STREET, SUITE 101
LIHU'E, KAUA'I, HAWAII 96766-1819**

**TESTIMONY OF JADE K. FOUNTAIN-TANIGAWA
COUNTY CLERK, COUNTY OF KAUA'I
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 1653, HD 1
RELATING TO ELECTIONS
February 25, 2016**

Chair Luke and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill No. 1653, HD 1. This Bill proposes to incrementally phase in statewide elections by mail by the 2022 primary election, assigns responsibilities between the State and counties for related expenses, and specifies the timing for mailing ballots. House Bill No. 1653, HD 1 also establishes standard hours for absentee polling places, amends procedures for handling and counting ballots, and provides for State appropriations.

Our Office supports the incremental transition to elections by mail and believes that it is the right time to begin making this change, especially due to the increased number of voters in each election opting to vote utilizing a ballot which has been mailed to them.

The current election model is more complicated than necessary and utilizes a significant amount of resources, because three (3) separate elections are actually conducted in conjunction with each Primary and General Election: 1) an absentee mail election, 2) an early voting (absentee walk) election, and 3) a polling place election on Election Day.

To ensure the overall integrity of the current election process, a highly complex coordination of effort is required between election officials, election day officials, and voting system contractors. The resulting policies and procedures are complicated and cumbersome, and difficult to implement for election day officials, since they only volunteer their time twice every 2-years.

Poll workers are especially impacted due to the extensive Federal and State laws governing operations at the polls, and we anticipate that Election Day registration will only increase the overall complexity of the process for this group of election day officials

Chair Luke and Committee Members
Re: HB 1653, HD 1, Relating to Elections
February 25, 2016
Page 2

The current election model does not deliver the convenience requested by many voters, as voters must still initiate the actual voting process by either applying for an absentee mail ballot, or physically reporting to an early voting site or Election Day polling place. Conducting elections by mail will send a ballot to every properly registered voter and establish a voting process which is as effortless and convenient as reasonably possible. Given the reasons stated above, we respectfully request your support of this Bill.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill No.1653, HD 1.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by several smaller loops and a horizontal line extending to the right.

JADE K. FOUNTAIN-TANIGAWA
County Clerk, County of Kaua'i

DANNY A. MATEO
County Clerk



JOSIAH K. NISHITA
Deputy County Clerk

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

COUNTY OF MAUI
200 S. HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.mauicounty.gov/county/clerk

TESTIMONY OF DANNY A. MATEO
COUNTY CLERK, COUNTY OF MAUI
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 1653, HD 1
RELATING TO ELECTIONS

FEBRUARY 25, 2016

Chair Luke and members of the House Committee on Finance, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support for House Bill No. 1653, HD 1. The purpose of this bill is to phase in statewide elections by mail by the 2022 primary election.

An all-mail election is an effort to make the voting process convenient for our voters and an effort to boost our voter turnout. With more voters choosing to vote by mail, we feel it is time to transition to an all-mail election. We believe it would be more efficient to focus our resources on absentee mail rather than our current process of three systems: absentee mail, absentee walk, and election day polling places.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 1653, HD 1.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2016 5:36 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: laurie.field@ppvnh.org
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB1653 on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM*

HB1653

Submitted on: 2/23/2016

Testimony for FIN on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Laurie Field	Planned Parenthood Votes Northwest and Hawaii	Support	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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To HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
for hearing on Thursday, February 25, 2016

RE: HB1653 RELATING TO ELECTIONS.

Incrementally phases in statewide elections by mail by the 2022 primary election. Assigns responsibilities between the State and counties for expenses related to mail elections for federal, state, and county offices. Requires clerks to send qualified voters their ballots forty-five days before an election. Establishes standards regarding hours of operation for absentee polling places. Specifies procedures for the counting of ballots. Repeals Election Day state holiday. Makes an appropriation.

From
Kenneth R. Conklin, Ph.D.
46-255 Kahuhipa St. Apt. 1205
Kane'ohe, HI 96744-6083
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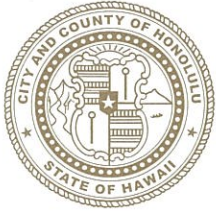
TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION

Legislators and newspaper editors are pushing the public to accept a near banning of in-person voting. The first step is that voting will be conducted entirely by mail (except for a few places where handicapped people can go) and the next step is that voting will be done entirely by internet (with a few places with computers and helpers for people who have no computers or are frightened of them).

My dear legislators, let me ask you: Are you willing to change the rules of the legislature to allow members to cast a committee or floor vote without being physically present? Why not allow a legislator to vote by proxy, or send in a vote on a piece of paper while sitting in a hospital after a heart attack? Senator Slom, who sits on every committee because he's the sole Republican, misses most committee votes because he can't be in four places at the same time. Why not let him vote by proxy or absentee ballot? Why can't he vote on his computer while sitting in his office? The same issue applies to Congress. Why should a Senator be required to fly 2,000 miles to cast a vote? Why should he need to be wheeled in on a hospital gurney for a vote expected to be close, when it would be so much better to accommodate his disability and let him vote from home or from a hospital bed? I think you know why.

With voting by mail or internet, the possibilities are endless for fraud and abuse. Politicians, corporate bosses, or union leaders can hold rallies with chili/rice where they watch everyone fill in the ballot and sign it, and put the stamp on it and mail it for them. Politicians can go to the home of a frail elder, or to the meeting room of a nursing home, and offer to "help" fill in that confusing ballot which is so hard for someone with alzheimers to figure out and hard for people with arthritis to fill in those little ovals. Backroom elections office workers can easily stuff the ballot box, out of sight, out of mind. Hackers can reprogram the counting machine so a vote for "A" will be counted as a vote for "B."

Your unwillingness to allow proxy voting, absentee voting, or internet voting for legislators or members of Congress speaks volumes about why voting by mail or (eventually) internet should not become mandatory or even normal. I believe my vote is as valuable as yours. My vote should have the same protections against fraud or abuse as your vote in committee or on the floor. Don't deny me the precinct polling place.



GLEN I. TAKAHASHI
CITY CLERK

KIMBERLY L. RIBELLIA
DEPUTY CITY CLERK

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

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TELEPHONE: (808) 768-3810 • FAX: (808) 768-3835

TESTIMONY OF GLEN TAKAHASHI
CITY CLERK, CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 1653 HD1
RELATING TO ELECTIONS

February 25, 2016

Chair Luke and Committee members:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 1653 HD1. The purpose of this bill is to provide a framework for vote-by-mail elections in Hawaii. The Office of the City Clerk generally supports voting by mail and is willing to work with the Legislature to craft legislation that ensures a fair and tidy administrative framework.

House Bill 1653 was introduced at the request of election officials and attempts to create the vote by mail election scheme by referencing the provisions in law that are currently used for absentee mail voting.

House Bill 1653 HD1 would benefit greatly with the inclusion of an additional policy provision specifying the mailing window for vote-by-mail ballots.

While this measure sets a ballot packet mailing date of "*no earlier than 45 days*" prior to the election, election statutes in vote-by-mail jurisdictions typically specify a shorter timeframe for mailing the ballot packet.

The State of Washington adopted a policy of "no earlier than 18 days" RCW 29A.40.07. The State of Oregon allows a window of "not sooner than 18 and not later than 14 days" ORS 254.470. Both include exceptions for overseas voters and to destinations out of state.

Including such a provision provides transparency for all stakeholders and uniformity across jurisdictions. The shorter timeframe also ensures that the packets are mailed after voter address corrections occur (following the voter registration deadline) and when voter interest in the election is highest.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 1653 HD1.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2016 6:44 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: ndavlantes@aol.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB1653 on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM*

HB1653

Submitted on: 2/23/2016

Testimony for FIN on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM in Conference Room 308

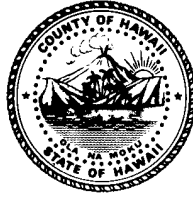
Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Nancy Davlantes	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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STEWART MAEDA
County Clerk



JON HENRICK
Deputy County Clerk

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

Elections Division
County of Hawai'i
Hawai'i County Building
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Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

LATE

TESTIMONY OF STEWART MAEDA
COUNTY CLERK, COUNTY OF HAWAI'I
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON HOUSE BILL NO. 1653, HD 1
RELATING TO ELECTIONS
FEBRUARY 25, 2016

Chair Luke and members of the House Committee on Finance, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 1653, HD 1. This Bill proposes to phase in statewide elections by mail by the 2022 primary election.

An all-mail election is a way to encourage voter participation. The absentee mail voting process has steadily increased over the years. This increase in absentee mail voting appears to be an indication that voters prefer a convenient way to cast their ballot. We believe now is the time to transition to an all-mail election.

The current election model consists of 3 election systems absentee mail, absentee walk, and polling place. These 3 systems utilize a considerable amount of resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 1653, HD 1.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 5:03 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: publicpolicy@oha.org
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB1653 on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM
Attachments: HB1653 Elections by Mail FIN 022516 FINAL.pdf



HB1653

Submitted on: 2/24/2016

Testimony for FIN on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Office of Hawaiian Affairs	Office of Hawaiian Affairs	Support	Yes

Comments:

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LATE

49 South Hotel Street, Room 314 | Honolulu, HI 96813
www.lwv-hawaii.com | 808.531.7448 | voters@lwv-hawaii.com

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Thursday, February 25, 2016, 3:00 p.m., Room 325
HB 1653, HD1 RELATING TO ELECTIONS

TESTIMONY

Janet Mason, Co-Chair, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair San Buenaventura, and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii strongly supports HB1653 HD1, which would incrementally phase in voting by mail by the 2022 primary election. Hawaii has been diligently moving to make it easier for citizens to exercise their fundamental right to cast a ballot; our established policies like early voting and permanent absentee voting make the franchise widely available. Starting voting by mail in 2020 with full implementation by 2022 gives election officials and the public sufficient time to adjust to other recent convenience reforms that are already underway: online voter registration (2015), late voter registration (2016) and same day voter registration (2018). These are all compatible with voting by mail.

Under this measure, for most elections the counties will continue to be responsible for mailing and receipt of ballots and the State will continue to be responsible for printing and counting ballots. This well-established division of labor makes sense, and we are gratified that all County Clerks endorse moving to voting by mail instead of our current complex approach (polling places, absentee voting, permanent absentee voting).

HB 1653 HD1 integrates voting by mail with our existing absentee and permanent absentee methods. Avoiding legal and operational confusion about this is important, because absentee voting by mail has become increasingly popular in Hawai'i. In our last general election, absentee ballots already accounted for the majority of the votes cast¹.

¹ For statewide primary elections mail-in ballots accounted for 42.4% of total ballots cast in 2010, 45.9% of primary ballots in 2012 and 51.2% of primary ballots in 2014. For Hawai'i General Elections, mail-in absentee ballots accounted for 42.4% in 2010, 45.9% of the vote on 2012 and 51.2% of the vote in 2014. Source: Hawai'i State Office of Elections: <http://elections.hawaii.gov/election-results>.



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Voting by mail has been promoted by the League of Women Voters of Hawaii since 1999, so the League applauds the intent of all “Voting by Mail” bills introduced this session. However, we prefer this measure, and we support the amendments made to the bill by the House Judiciary. We hope the Legislature will rally around HB1653 HD1 to meet procedural deadlines and secure the \$375,000 one-time appropriation requested by the Office of Elections. The estimated savings is \$800,000 each election cycle. Please secure this important opportunity for Hawaii voters and save money by doing so!

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.