



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF ELECTIONS**

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

SCOTT T. NAGO
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

TESTIMONY OF THE
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER, OFFICE OF ELECTIONS
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND LABOR
ON SENATE BILL NO. 2116
RELATING TO ELECTIONS

February 2, 2016

Chair Keith-Agaran and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill No. 2116. The purpose of this bill is to transition all voters by 2022 to voting by mail or at absentee walk sites and to expand the procedures used for absentee voting.

We believe the transition to all-mail elections will encourage voter turnout, streamline the administration of elections, and result in cost savings. Currently, elections consist of three systems: (1) absentee walk locations; (2) election day polling places; and (3) absentee mail. The vast majority of voters either vote at election day polling places or by absentee mail. As such, we believe it would be more efficient to focus our resources on absentee mail, with a significantly smaller election day presence limited to voters obtaining a replacement ballot package, or voting on a direct recording electronic voting machine; as well as some minor variation at the absentee walk locations.

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 traditional polling places to their present 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.

Finally, 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill No. 2116.

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 SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND LABOR

ON SENATE BILL NO. 2116

RELATING TO ELECTIONS

FEBRUARY 2, 2016

Chair Keith-Agaran and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support for Senate Bill No. 2116. 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 Senate Bill No. 2116.

JADE K. FOUNTAIN-TANIGAWA
County Clerk

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



SCOTT K. SATO
Deputy County Clerk

Facsimile: (808) 241-6207
E-mail: elections@kauai.gov

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

February 1, 2016

TESTIMONY OF JADE K. FOUNTAIN-TANIGAWA
COUNTY CLERK, COUNTY OF KAUA'I
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND LABOR
ON SENATE BILL NO. 2116
RELATING TO ELECTIONS

Chair Keith-Agaran and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill No. 2116. 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. Senate Bill No. 2116 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.

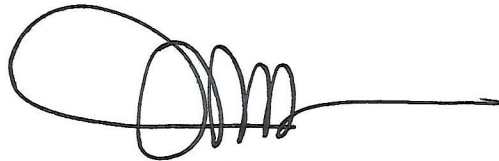
To ensure the overall integrity of the current election process, a highly complex coordination of effort is required between election officials, election day officials, and voting system contractors. The resulting policies and procedures are complicated and cumbersome, and difficult to implement for 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 Keith-Agaran and Committee Members
Testimony for SB 2116, Relating to Elections
February 1, 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 testify in support of Senate Bill No. 2116.

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

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



Senate Judiciary and Labor Committee
Chair Gil Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair Maile Shimabukuro

Tuesday, 02/02/2016 at 9:00 AM in Room 016
SB 2116 – Relating to Elections

TESTIMONY OF SUPPORT
Carmille Lim, Executive Director, Common Cause Hawaii

Dear Chair Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair Shimabukuro, and members of the Senate Judiciary and Labor Committee:

Common Cause Hawaii supports SB 2116 which incrementally phases in statewide “Voting-by-Mail”, or, “Elections-by-Mail” system by the 2022 Primary Election.

Common Cause believes that increased citizen participation in the electoral process is a crucial component of a maintaining a successful democracy, and believes that Voting-by-Mail provides people more time to exercise their right to vote.

VOTING TRENDS

It’s important that the ways we engage the voting public be maximized to counter the perceived voter apathy, and other factors that have led to a decrease in voter participation in recent years. We believe the intent of SB 2116 achieves that goal in numerous ways; the first of which being the basic voter preference for Voting-by-Mail. Although statewide Voting-by-Mail has yet to be fully implemented locally, it has been successfully utilized in Hawaii as recently as the 2010 1st Congressional District election. According to figures provided by the Office of Elections, trends show a leaning of basic voter preference for VBM with 83% of the early voters from the 2014 Hawaii Primary Election opting to do so by mail-in absentee ballot.

OVERCOMING LOGISTICAL OBSTICLES

In addition to the individual and collective benefits that Voting-by-Mail provides to the public, tangible solutions to significant logistical obstacles accompany the intent of this bill: Hawaii’s 2014 Primary Election reminded us that the potential for storms, hurricanes, and other natural disasters, pose a substantial threat to an electoral system which relies heavily on holding elections on a single day. A Voting-by-Mail system is more “protected” from these natural disasters.

POTENTIAL TO SAVE TAXPAYER MONEY

Estimates from the Office of Elections show that after an initial technology investment, the state would save at least \$874,000 per election cycle. Tax dollars can be saved by the reduced need for as many walk-in voter service centers that accompanies a Voting-by-Mail system; a system which will only be further complemented by the election reform measures that are in the process of being implemented: Online Voter Registration, as of 2015; Late Voter Registration at Early Walk-In Sites as of 2016, and Election Day Registration as of 2018. Starting Voting-by-Mail in 2020, and phasing to its full implementation in 2012 will enable election officials to dedicate one election cycle to implementing and refining each new voting program.

These programs, combined with implementing a Voting-by-Mail system, will showcase Hawaii as a “model” state for voting reforms.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony **supporting SB 2116**.



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

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND LABOR

Tuesday, February 2, 2016, 9:00 a.m., Room 016
SB2116 RELATING TO ELECTIONS

TESTIMONY

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

Chair Keith-Agaran, Vice-Chair Shimabukuro, and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii strongly supports SB 2116 which would incrementally phase in voting by mail by the 2022 primary election. Instead of requiring voters to cast ballots at one of some 250 polling places statewide, or apply for absentee ballots, ballots would be mailed to all registered voters at their homes. Under this measure ballots would be mailed 45 days before an election, voters would fill out the ballot and then either mail it back or deliver it personally to an absentee polling place located on each island – in for example, county clerk’s offices, schools or other strategic locations selected by elections officials. These absentee polling places will remain open through Election Day, and the deadline for ballot returns would be 6:00 p.m. on Election Day.¹ Secure electronic transmission for delivery and return of ballots would also be available.

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 were gratified to learn that in the November 2015

¹ This 45-day timing greatly expands the length of time during which voters may consider candidates and study ballot issues. Under current absentee voting, ballots are mailed approximately 20 days prior to an election and must be received by close of polls on Election Day.



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Informational Briefing to the Legislature, all County Clerks endorsed moving to voting by mail instead of our current complex approach (polling places, absentee voting, permanent absentee voting).

SB 2116 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 cast².

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 – by our count there are nine of them. However, we prefer this bill and hope the Legislature will rally around SB2116 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.

² 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>.

TESTIMONY

**The Libertarian Party of Hawaii
c/o 1658 Liholiho St #205
Honolulu, HI 96822**

RE: SB 2116 to be heard Tuesday February 2, at 9AM in conference room 016

OPPOSE

To the Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary”

Currently voters have a choice to vote at the polls on election-day or by absentee mail in or walk in. This bill seeks to eliminate the most popular choice. Why annoy hundreds of thousands of voters who have shown by their behavior how they prefer to vote? Have you forgotten the van cams wherein the legislature thought forcing hundreds of thousands of drivers to obey our speed limits despite the clear knowledge that they didn't want to was a smart idea.

From a practical stand point mail in voting creates several problems. Not the least of which being the privacy of voting can no longer be assured. Nor can it be certain that the votes were cast by the voters indicated. Voters can be made subject to manipulation by persons from some group they belong to who sends representatives to their home to “assist them with the voting.” Family members can also abuse the process. With fewer voting choices many of the people who now vote at the polls may stop voting.

I am sure there are do-gooders who think this is a wonderful idea. They will show charts and graphs and other stuff. I ask you to consider the people in your district who prefer to vote the old fashioned way and if you feel compelling them to do something different is what they elected you for.

Sincerely:



Tracy Ryan, Chair

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [JDLTestimony](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SB2116 on Feb 2, 2016 09:00AM*
Date: Sunday, January 31, 2016 5:52:35 PM

SB2116

Submitted on: 1/31/2016

Testimony for JDL on Feb 2, 2016 09:00AM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Susan J. Wurtzburg	American Association of University Women, 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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Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: *Submitted testimony for SB2116 on Feb 2, 2016 09:00AM*
Date: Sunday, January 31, 2016 12:17:40 PM

SB2116

Submitted on: 1/31/2016

Testimony for JDL on Feb 2, 2016 09:00AM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Barbara Polk	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB2116 on Feb 2, 2016 09:00AM
Date: Saturday, January 30, 2016 9:47:42 AM

SB2116

Submitted on: 1/30/2016

Testimony for JDL on Feb 2, 2016 09:00AM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ben Trevino	Individual	Support	No

Comments: As a community we need to take every step possible to make voting a convenient, and inclusive activity. Vote by mail has been extremely successful in Oregon, importantly driving some of the highest voter turnouts in the country with the lowest rates of fraud at lowest costs. If we are serious about soliciting the participation of every eligible voter in Hawaii (and I believe that we all think that we should) we need to bring voting to them. I have switched my voting status to absentee and have found it lets me research my decisions more comfortably and gives me time to make a considered choice.

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Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB2116 on Feb 2, 2016 09:00AM
Date: Sunday, January 31, 2016 2:52:27 PM

SB2116

Submitted on: 1/31/2016

Testimony for JDL on Feb 2, 2016 09:00AM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Brodie Lockard	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Vote-by-Mail makes perfect sense for Hawaii--low turnout, many retirees, hard to staff polls, people busy with multiple jobs. Please pass this.

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