



SCOTT T. NAGO
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF ELECTIONS**

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

TESTIMONY OF THE
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER, OFFICE OF ELECTIONS
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
ON SENATE BILL NO. 2496, SD 1
RELATING TO ELECTIONS

February 24, 2016

Chair Tokuda and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill No. 2496, SD 1. The purpose of this bill is to transition all voters by 2022 to all-mail elections.

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.

Transitioning to elections by mail will increase the amount of ballots that the counties will receive and preprocess beyond their current capacity. As such, we propose a capital investment of \$350,000 for scanner/sorters to be purchased for the counties to process the mail ballot envelopes. Given the timeline for the implementing all-mail elections, no funding is necessary for this fiscal year. Instead, \$50,000 will be necessary in fiscal year 2018 to purchase a scanner/sorter for the County of Kauai, and then \$300,000 in fiscal year 2020 to purchases scanners for the remaining counties.

We are concerned with proposed section 11-F 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 Senate Bill No. 2496, SD 1.

Legislative Testimony

SB2496 SD1

RELATING TO ELECTIONS

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

February 24, 2016

1:00 p.m.

Room 211

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** SB2496 SD1, which reduces barriers to voting and increases voter participation opportunities, by allowing future elections to be held by mail.

It is well known that Hawai'i has historically suffered from low voter turnout. Hawai'i consistently ranks lower than the national average for voter participation among those eligible to vote in the presidential election.¹ In response to historical data reflecting the underrepresentation of Native Hawaiians in particular in the polls, during the past two election seasons OHA has implemented a "Hawaiian Voice, Hawaiian Vote: I Mana Ka Leo" campaign to increase Native Hawaiian voter registration, education, and turnout.

During the course of these campaigns, many potential Native Hawaiian voters expressed ambivalence toward taking time off of work to visit polls, or taking the necessary steps to complete the absentee voter registration process. This measure would reduce such hurdles for voter participation by automatically giving citizens the opportunity to vote at their own convenience, from the comfort of their own homes. This will ultimately result in a more accessible election process and potentially higher Native Hawaiian voter turnout.

Evidence indicates that the people of Hawai'i generally would also likely benefit from the modernized voting process envisioned by this bill. For example, Washington, Oregon, and Colorado—the three states that already conduct elections-by-mail—saw marked increases in voter turnout after implementing

¹ Editorial Board, *The Worst Voter Turnout in 72 Years*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, Nov. 11, 2014, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/12/opinion/the-worst-voter-turnout-in-72-years.html>.

their mail-in voting systems.² Notably, these states have not found that holding elections by mail complicates election administration, or leads to increased voter fraud.³ Implementing such a system for Hawai'i would not only mean that every eligible voter could vote at their own convenience, but also that voters would have a much longer time with ballots in their hands, giving them ample opportunity to consider issues and candidates and make more informed decisions.

Hawai'i's electorate may benefit greatly from the increased convenience offered by this measure, but we recognize that the logistics of implementation can be complex. Therefore, on these matters, we defer to the Office of Elections and County Clerks' Offices.

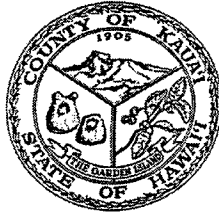
Given the potential to greatly bolster Hawai'i's low voter turnout rate, including the turnout of Native Hawaiian voters, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** SB2496 SD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

² New York Times, Graphic: Voting by Mail (Oct. 6, 2012), http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/10/07/us/voting-by-mail.html?_r=0; Joey Bunch, *Despite criticism, few efforts to change Colorado's mail ballot law*, THE DENVER POST, Feb 15, 2015, http://www.denverpost.com/politics/ci_27529935/despite-criticism-few-efforts-change-colorados-mail-ballot.

³ Allison Terry, *Voter turnout: the 6 states that rank highest, and why*, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, November 6, 2012, available at <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Elections/2012/1106/Voter-turnout-the-6-states-that-rank-highest-and-why/Oregon>.

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, KAUAI, HAWAII 96766-1819

TESTIMONY OF JADE K. FOUNTAIN-TANIGAWA
COUNTY CLERK, COUNTY OF KAUAI
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
ON SENATE BILL NO. 2496, SD 1
RELATING TO ELECTIONS

February 24, 2016

Chair Tokuda and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill No. 2496, SD 1. This Bill would require the Office of Elections to implement elections by mail in a county with a population of fewer than 100,000 beginning with the 2018 Primary Election, and expands elections by mail to each of the other counties beginning with the 2020 Primary Election. The Bill also establishes an elections by mail system, procedures for postponed elections, makes conforming amendments, and appropriates funds.

Our Office supports the 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 coordinated 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 Tokuda and Committee Members
Testimony for SB 2496, SD 1, Relating to Elections
February 24, 2016
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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 ensure that a ballot is delivered to every properly registered voter and will also establish an effortless and convenient voting process. Given the reasons stated above, we respectfully request your support of this Bill.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill No.2496, SD 1.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke 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 SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
ON SENATE BILL NO. 2496, SD 1
RELATING TO ELECTIONS
FEBRUARY 24, 2016

Chair Tokuda and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill No. 2496, SD 1 and for the opportunity to offer comments. The purpose of this bill is to phase in statewide elections by mail by the 2020 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.

For clarification, this bill implements elections by mail in a county with a population of less than 100,000 in 2018. We would request that the bill expressly exclude the County of Kalawao from this provision. The county of Kalawao falls into the category of a county with a population of less than 100,000, but is already covered in HRS §15-4(b) for all mail elections and in HRS §11-1. Definitions,

“County, the counties of Hawaii, Maui Kauai, and the city and county of Honolulu, as the context may require. For the purpose of this title, the county of Kalawao shall be deemed to be included in the county of Maui.”

We would like to recommend that language be included to give the County Clerk some discretion over the hours and days of operation for additional voter service centers that may be established. The County of Maui has had difficulties in the past recruiting volunteers for polling place operations on Lanai, and currently is facing difficulties finding

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volunteers on Molokai willing to work during the absentee walk-in period for the 2016 Primary and General Elections. In 2014, the County of Maui tried to establish an absentee walk-in facility on Lanai, but after extensive print and radio advertising, failed to receive even three volunteer applications, the minimum required to open such facility. Requiring additional voter service centers to maintain the same hours and days of operation as others statewide may create insurmountable challenges relating to the lack of volunteer staffing and transportation and logistical issues for the County of Maui to provide additional voter service centers to our residents on Lanai and Molokai.

Thank you for the opportunity to support and comment on Senate Bill No. 2496, SD 1.



Senate Ways + Means Committee
Chair Jill Tokuda, Vice Chair Donovan Dela Cruz

Wednesday 02/24/2016 at 1:00 PM in Room 211
SB 2496 – Relating to Elections

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

Dear Chair Tokuda, Vice Chair Dela Cruz, and members of the Senate Ways + Means Committee:

Common Cause Hawaii supports SB 2496 which would (eventually) establish a statewide “Voting-by-Mail”, or, “Elections-by-Mail” system.

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 OBSTACLES

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. Phasing in Voting-by-Mail 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 2496.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [WAM Testimony](#)
Cc: begoniabarry@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB2496 on Feb 24, 2016 13:00PM
Date: Tuesday, February 23, 2016 11:33:38 AM

SB2496

Submitted on: 2/23/2016

Testimony for WAM on Feb 24, 2016 13:00PM in Conference Room 211

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

Comments: Aloha, I support mail in voting. Please make it easy for everyone to be able to exercise their freedom to vote! Mahalo,

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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