



49 South Hotel Street, Room 314 | Honolulu, HI 96813  
[www.lwv-hawaii.com](http://www.lwv-hawaii.com) | 808.531.7448 | [voters@lwvhawaii.com](mailto:voters@lwvhawaii.com)

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND LABOR

Friday, February 13, 2015, 9:00 a.m., Room 016

SB 509 RELATING TO PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS  
TESTIMONY

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

Chair Name/Names, Vice-Chair Name or Names, and Committee Members:

**The League of Women Voters of Hawaii strongly supports** SB509 which would require preparation of a statement for each proposed state constitutional amendment in plain English, indicating the purpose, limitations and effects of the proposed amendment. The bill also requires the Attorney General to distribute these statement to the Office of Elections and County Clerks, who would in turn be required to make the statements available to the public in physical or online sites.

Many voters are unaware of proposed constitutional amendments or proposed charter amendments before Election Day, in spite of efforts by State and County election officials to inform the public about the proposals. We have received feedback from poll workers who complained about how long it took people to vote because they had no idea there were ballot or charter measures on the ballot. Voters often do not understand the proposals, so have no idea how to vote on them. This measure addresses both concerns, by making a "plain English" statement available to the public and also requiring that this statement be more widely circulated by election officials.

The League suggests an amendment to this bill concerning county charter amendments. We think a similar "plain English" statement is required for these proposals as well and suggest that the chief legal officer of the County where the charter amendment is proposed be responsible for preparing such a statement and the County Clerk be responsible for circulating the charter statement to the public in all physical or online sites where the Clerk makes the proposed charter amendment questions available to the public.

We urge you to pass/hold this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



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

Friday 02/13/2015 at 9:00 AM in Room 016  
SB509 Relating to Proposed Constitutional Amendments

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

---

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

**Common Cause Hawaii supports SB509**, which would require:

- The attorney general to prepare a statement for each proposed constitutional amendment in plain English that indicates the purpose, limitations, and effects of the proposed amendment.
- The attorney general to distribute each statement to the state office of elections and all county clerks for further distribution.
- The office of elections and county clerks to make each statement available to the public in all physical or online sites where they make proposed constitutional amendment questions available to the public.

It comes as no surprise that many voters – particularly those without a legal background – struggle with understanding the Constitutional Amendment questions on ballots, which are currently written in legalese. We believe this bill is a great public service and will help voters better understand the questions proposed.

#### COMMENTS

In lieu of Constitutional Amendments, **we ask that this bill be applied to Ballot Initiative questions, which encompass Constitutional Amendments and Charter Amendments. Both of which are written complexly.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **in support of SB509**.

**From:** [mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov)  
**To:** [JDLTestimony](#)  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB509 on Feb 13, 2015 09:00AM  
**Date:** Saturday, February 07, 2015 7:02:07 PM

---

**SB509**

Submitted on: 2/7/2015

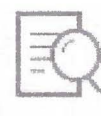
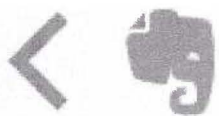
Testimony for JDL on Feb 13, 2015 09:00AM in Conference Room 016

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
wynnie hee	Individual	Support	No

Comments: It's about time we have a common sense law like this to HELP voters understand proposed constitutional amendments that we are expected to vote on. Now, if only the explanation of the amendments can be publicized in a TIMELY manner...

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.

Do not reply to this email. This inbox is not monitored. For assistance please email [webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov)



I cannot stress enough how important it is to have constitutional amendments available that are written in plain English for clearer understanding by the general public. It is imperative that the public understand any, and all, government measures that will affect them. This measure should be written to include: the two dominant Filipino dialogues, Japanese, and Spanish since there are large populations in the islands, and most public documents are available in multi-language formats

Thank you for hearing my testimony.  
Barbara Mattson  
Lahaina, Maui

**From:** [mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov)  
**To:** [JDLTestimony](#)  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB509 on Feb 13, 2015 09:00AM  
**Date:** Thursday, February 12, 2015 11:27:31 PM

---

**SB509**

Submitted on: 2/12/2015

Testimony for JDL on Feb 13, 2015 09:00AM in Conference Room 016

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Joseph Kohn MD	Individual	Support	No

Comments: [www.WeAreOne.cc](http://www.WeAreOne.cc)

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.

Do not reply to this email. This inbox is not monitored. For assistance please email [webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov)