



**STATE OF HAWAII  
OFFICE OF ELECTIONS**

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SCOTT T. NAGO  
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

**TESTIMONY OF THE  
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER, OFFICE OF ELECTIONS  
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
ON SENATE BILL NO. 958  
RELATING TO ELECTIONS**

February 8, 2019

Chair Rhoads and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding Senate Bill No. 958. The purpose of this bill is to require the Office of Elections and County Clerks to publish and distribute a voters' pamphlet.

This bill would require the Office of Elections to publish and disseminate a voters' pamphlet for each election, which would include information regarding ballot questions; candidate statements; contact information for the Campaign Spending Commission and qualified political parties; and educational materials such as voter registration information and voting instructions.

Additionally, this bill would require voter pamphlets' to be disseminated "(1) through postal mail; (2) at public libraries, polling places, or absentee polling places; (3) in braille, large print, or audio recording; (4) in a daily or weekly publication of statewide circulation or countywide circulation in the affected county; or (5) in electronic form."

Based on the parameters of the bill, we anticipate that it would cost our office approximately \$6,015,543 per election to compile, publish, and disseminate a voter pamphlet. The following table details our cost estimates:

	<b>Primary</b>	<b>General</b>
Printing	2,000,800	1,195,600
Mailing	651,900	651,900
Publishing	910,000	560,000
Translations	27,825	12,588
Accessible Format	2,960	1,970
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>3,593,485</u></b>	<b><u>2,422,058</u></b>

Our estimates are based on the number of candidates and questions that appeared on the 2018 Election ballots, the approximate number of households, as well as federal requirements. For example, any education materials mailed to voters must be provided in English, Chinese, and Ilocano in the City and County of Honolulu pursuant to the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Since 2012, an average of 324 candidates have filed a nomination paper each election. In the 2018 Elections, 311 candidates appeared on the Primary Election ballot, and there were 124 candidates and 14 ballot questions on the General Election ballot. We approximate that a voter pamphlet for these elections would have required 164 pages in the Primary Election, and 98 pages in the General Election allowing candidates to submit a 250-word statement. We also anticipate that the voters' pamphlet would be mailed to approximately 530,000 households.

We would note that the voters' pamphlet should be finalized no later than 60 days prior to each election to allow for layout and printing. This ensures we are able to meet the 45-day deadline to send ballots to voters covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). Similarly, as the pamphlet would provide information about registering to vote, it should arrive at households ahead of the voter registration deadline 30 days prior to the election to notify citizens about the deadline, updating their registration, and late registration.

We would propose amending this measure to reduce the cost associated with producing and disseminating a voters' pamphlet. We believe there are alternatives to produce a voters' pamphlet in a more cost-effective manner. For example, by amending this measure to require that a voters' pamphlet be mailed rather than published in the newspapers. Another option would be that the voters' pamphlet includes only information about ballot questions and voting in the upcoming election, as many candidates create their own campaign materials for their districts. This would decrease the number of pages to be printed per item as well as the cost of postage and publishing in the newspapers. Our final proposal to realize further cost savings would be to only require this information be made available on our website, which would be accessible to all voters. In this model,

we could produce a postcard mailing to send to every household to notify citizens that this information is available.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 958.

Council Chair  
Mike White

Vice-Chair  
Robert Carroll

Presiding Officer Pro Tempore  
Stacy Crivello

Councilmembers  
Alika Atay  
Elle Cochran  
Don S. Guzman  
Riki Hokama  
Kelly T. King  
Yuki Lei K. Sugimura



Director of Council Services  
Maria E. Zielinski

**COUNTY COUNCIL**  
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February 7, 2019

TO: The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Kelly T. King  
Council Chair

Handwritten signature of Kelly King in black ink.

SUBJECT: **HEARING OF FEBRUARY 8, 2019; TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 958, RELATING TO ELECTIONS**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support** of this important measure. The purpose of this bill is to increase the amount of information provided to registered voters in Hawai'i by requiring the Chief Election Officer to publish and disseminate a voters' pamphlet and by appropriating funds to allow the Chief Election Officer to produce and distribute a voters' pamphlet for each election.

The Maui County Council has not had the opportunity to take a formal position on this measure. Therefore, I am providing this testimony in my capacity as an individual member of the Maui County Council.

I support this measure for the following reasons:

1. Voter-information pamphlets would allow voters to more readily and effectively exercise their right to vote by informing them about ballot measures and candidates seeking office.
2. As stated on page 79 of the Countywide Policy Plan, it is a goal set forth in the Maui County General Plan to promote civic engagement through an increase of voter registration and turnout. This measure would be a positive step toward fulfillment of that goal.
3. In 2018, only 52.4 percent of Maui County's registered voters and 52.7 percent of registered voters statewide cast a ballot in the General Election. This measure would make potential voters more well informed and, consequently, more likely to cast a ballot.

For the foregoing reasons, I **support** this measure.



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COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
Friday, February 8, 2019, 9:00 a.m., Room 016

SB 958 RELATING TO ELECTIONS

**TESTIMONY**

Janet Mason, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Wakai and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii strongly supports SB 958 that provides voter education. This is an excellent bill.

We agree with the premise of the measure that Hawaii's voter education falls far short and we also support the requirement for a written pamphlet as outlined in the bill. This pamphlet should be distributed by the Office of Elections (in the case of Federal or State elections) or County Clerks (in the case of County-only elections). These agencies are the only means of effective statewide distribution and the only source that voters will accept as unbiased.

Section 11-B of this bill provides a very good comprehensive list of pamphlet contents. This list goes further than SB1481 and SB1058 in specifying what should be included in a voter education pamphlet.

Ballot measures deserve particular attention because voters struggle with trying to understand the legal vocabulary used in the wording of proposals. Can SB 958 be amended to include language found in SB1058 which suggests that the Attorney General be required to provide a plain English statement of these measures? We support this wholeheartedly. We do not underestimate the difficulty of providing this service for voters, but we think the Attorney General's office is likely to prepare an accurate statement. The League calls for collaboration between these state and county agencies for this approach. In addition to the specifics of the plain English statement, "pro/con" analyses of the proposals can help voters understand the question; this pro/con analysis would not necessarily have to be done by the Attorney General.



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For many years, we have pursued voting modernization such as voting by mail and automatic voter registration – all in hope of making voting convenient for voters. We will be the first to admit such efforts are important but insufficient. Once registered, how can we encourage people to vote? Surely voter education is important, just as fielding a competitive group of good candidates is important. But here we are emphasizing as strongly as we can - Hawaii needs comprehensive voter education.

The voting public including the League of Women Voters are prepared to work with the Office of Elections and the County clerks to inaugurate this important service. An appropriation is called for to support this new effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

**SB-958**

Submitted on: 2/6/2019 9:28:52 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/8/2019 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Colin D Moore	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Wakai and Committee Members:

**I strongly support SB 958 that requires the chief election officer to publish and disseminate a voters' pamphlet.**

In sixteen states across the nation, the office of elections is required to publish and distribute a voter information pamphlet. Nearly every empirical study of voters' guides indicates that they are an inexpensive and effective way to increase civic engagement.

First, voters read them and find them useful. One survey of Californians found that **a majority of people who read their guide considered it their most important source of election information.**

Second, **voters' guides can level the playing field for candidates who are unable to raise large sums of money.** In many states, all candidates are given the opportunity to communicate directly to voters through a brief written statement included in the pamphlet.

Finally, **voters' guides reduce what is known as "voter drop-off rates,"** which occur when citizens don't vote on certain questions or for certain offices. This is often because they simply have no idea who the candidates are or any understanding of the ballot questions – and a voters' guide can help. One study from Washington State, for example, found that the number of blank votes dropped significantly after the state issued its voters' pamphlet.

In sum, a voters' pamphlet is a cheap and effective way to improve Hawaii's civic health.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.