



Representative Bertrand Kobayashi Community Update

DIAMOND HEAD, KAHALA,
KAIMUKI, KAPAHULU

March 2021

Multi-billion dollar Federal relief

Hawaii will be getting an estimated total of \$6 billion from the latest Federal Covid relief law, including \$1.6 billion to the State of Hawaii, \$391 million for DOE schools, and \$350 million for the C&C of Honolulu, to be spent from now to December 2024. In addition, there are funds for Covid health care, University of Hawaii, Native Hawaiians, small businesses, child tax credits, and other specific uses. The expectation is that this may be the last federal covid-related/stimulus relief, so these funds will be spread over the next 3 ½ years, beyond the 2021-2023 fiscal biennium.

Federal restriction on tax relief/cuts

One 'string' attached to Federal relief funds is restriction on state and local tax cuts from now to December 2024. Accordingly, Hawaii cannot pass laws related to earned income tax credits, low-income housing tax credits, renter tax credits, precious metal exemptions, etc.

Governor Ige Signs Bill Lowering Employer Contribution Tax Rate for Two Years

Governor David Ige signed HB 1278 HD1 Relating to Employment Security into law as Act 1 on March 2, 2021, setting the employer contribution tax rate for unemployment insurance at a lower level for 2021 and 2022.

HB 1278, HD1 was initiated by the House of Representatives in response to the unprecedented increase in Hawaii's unemployment rate due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Without intervention, Schedule H (the highest tax rate) would have been in effect for 2021.

Reducing unemployment insurance tax rates will help contain the economic fallout from COVID-19 and expedite the state's economic recovery. The House members understood the need to protect employers from higher tax rates at a time when they can least afford it.

The measure allows employers to pay, on average, less than half of what they would otherwise pay into the system:

* In 2021, the average Schedule H tax on employers would have been \$1,800 per employee, per year. Act 1 reduces the average tax to \$850 – for a savings of \$950 per employee per year.

• In 2022, the average tax would have been \$1,670 per employee per year. Act 1 reduces the average tax to \$790 – for a savings of \$880 per employee, per year.



DIAMOND HEAD STATE MONUMENT WILL NOW BE OPEN SIX DAYS A WEEK

Posted on Mar 1, 2021

Beginning on Monday, March 8th, Diamond Head State Monument (DHSM) will be open Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and closed only on Wednesdays. The hours of operation will remain the same, 6:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (last hike). Gates will be closed at 6 p.m. In accordance with recent rule changes, Hawai'i residents can park and enter DHSM for free. Recent established fees are in effect for non-residents and commercial vehicles.



VACCINATIONS FOR THOSE 70 AND OLDER BEGIN MONDAY, MARCH



The Hawai'i Department of Health announces that beginning March 8th, the state is expanding the pool of those eligible for COVID-19 vaccinations to people age 70 and older.

Thus far, vaccines have been reserved for healthcare workers, those in long-term care facilities, frontline essential workers, and kupuna 75 years and older.

Weekly vaccine allotments to Hawai'i have increased from about 40,000 doses a month ago to this week's allotment of more than 67,000 doses. This increase and the recent authorization allowing use of the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine, accelerates Hawai'i's vaccination schedule.

Please go to the State of Hawaii Department of Health website at <https://hawaiiicovid19.com/vaccination-registration/> for more information on where to register for the vaccine.