



Legislative Update from

# Senator Mike Gabbard



*Aloha Friends and Neighbors,*

Recently, I had the opportunity to sign the Book of Condolences at the Consulate General of Japan on behalf of all the residents of Senate District 19. I assured the people of Japan that they are in our prayers and thoughts as they continue to deal with the recent tragedy. Here are some other things I'd like to share with you.



*April 2011*

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## SENATE DISTRICT 19

MAKAKILO, KAPOLEI, KALAELOA  
WAIKELE, VILLAGE PARK  
ROYAL KUNIA, HONOKAI HALE,



## *Listen-Story*

My next "Listen-story" community meeting will be held on May 7th at the Kunia Starbucks (Kunia Shopping Center) from 9 to 10am. Our session ends on May 5th, so this meeting will include a legislative wrap up. Please contact me if I can help you in any way. My phone number is 586-6830 and email is [sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov)

## **Jerrika Kalamau to Represent Kapolei at 2011 Macy's Day Parade**

It was a very emotional experience to surprise Jerrika Kalamau during her 9<sup>th</sup> grade Health class at Kapolei High on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. I presented Jerrika with a certificate from the State Senate for her commitment to success and excellence in the face of adversity. Jerrika was given up to foster care when her mother was going through a



very difficult time in her life. Instead of harboring feelings of contempt, Jerrika displayed maturity beyond her years and found it in her heart to forgive her mother. More impressively, she has taken her experience as a foster child in stride, recognizing her childhood not as a liability, but as an asset that is integral to who she is. When she entered Kapolei High School last fall, Jerrika put her unwaveringly hopeful attitude to practice, and immersed herself in extracurricular activities. She is a member of the high school show choir, which counts as a singing and dancing extra credit course.

Perhaps most important, however, has been Jerrika's experience playing a musical instrument. In middle school, she fell in love with playing the clarinet. When she entered Kapolei High School, Jerrika joined the concert band, which has served as a conduit for her love and passion for music. Through her music Jerrika has found acceptance and it has facilitated her personal growth as an individual. This year, Jerrika's hard work and perseverance was awarded with the prestigious nomination to participate in the 2011 Macy's Day Parade in New York City on Thanksgiving Day.

Another proud Kapolei High 9th grade student, Cassius Alcantara, will be joining Jerrika and playing the trumpet at the Macy's Day Parade. We know both Jerrika and Cassius will represent Kapolei and all of Hawai'i with aloha in the parade. Jerrika is currently raising money to help cover expenses for her trip to New York. If you'd like to help out, please contact her aunt, Marialena Kalamau, at 348-5956.

## READ ALOUD AMERICA DAY March 2



Senator Gabbard reading to Ms. Nagashima's 4th grade class at Mauka Lani Elementary School.



Senator Gabbard talking story with Ms. Jody Kawamata-Chang's 6th grade class at Kalei'opu'u Elementary School about the book he just shared with them.

## Mauka Lani Elementary to Get Second Evacuation Route

I was very pleased to have received a letter from Governor Neil Abercrombie on February 25<sup>th</sup> saying that he had released \$450,000 in construction funds for Mauka Lani Elementary as part of his New Day Work Projects. The funding will go toward providing an additional evacuation route for the school. This project will connect the sidewalk to 17 portable classrooms at the back of the school with an evacuation route through the adjacent Mauka Lani Neighborhood Park. The expected completion date is October 2012. Mahalo to the Gov for his efforts in improving the safety of our schools in Senate District 19.

## More Solar Coming to Kapolei

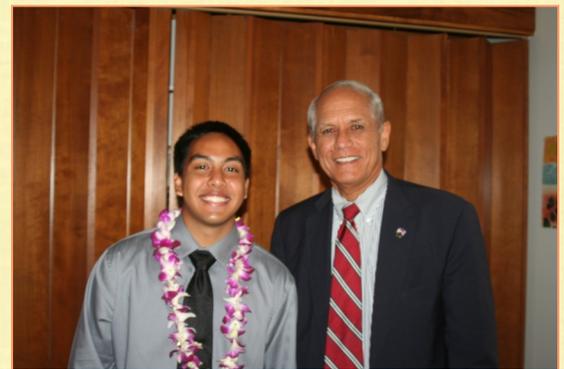
It was great getting the news on March 23<sup>rd</sup> that SunPower and HECO had announced an agreement for SunPower to sell them solar PV power over a 20-year period. The power will be generated by a 5 MW solar farm located on 40-acres of leased Department of Hawaiian Home Lands in Kalaeloa at Roosevelt and Boxer Road. (almost in my backyard!) The solar panels will be equipped with SunPower's tracker system, which will allow the panels to follow the sun's movement during the day and increase sunlight capture by up to 25%. SunPower plans to begin construction this year and complete the solar farm within 5 months.



## Helping Out with Kapolei High Project Grad



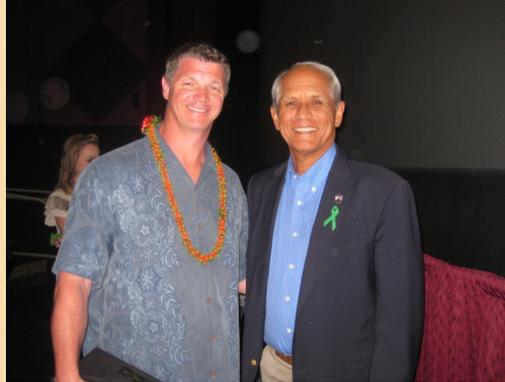
I was asked by Cynthia Spector, secretary of the Kapolei High Project Grad 2011 Committee, to help out with the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Kapolei High School Project GRAD Golf-for-Grads Tournament. They are looking for donations, players, and volunteers for the golf tournament, which will take place at the Kapolei Golf Course on May 9<sup>th</sup>. The 2011 Project Grad event is intended to provide a fun, safe, drug-alcohol-tobacco free celebration for graduating seniors. I'll be playing myself and hope to see you out there. For more information, please contact Cynthia at 384-4435.



On March 10, 2011, Senator Mike Gabbard met with James Stabilio, a Makakilo resident and McKinley High School senior. James was honored by the Hawai'i State Senate for winning the Boys and Girls Club's "Youth of the Year" competition.

## "Heaven's Rain" Tells Powerful Story of Pain and Forgiveness

Carol and I saw an exclusive screening of the movie, "Heaven's Rain", during the Hawai'i International Film Festival at the Regal Theaters at Dole Cannery on March 17th. "Heaven's Rain" focuses on the harrowing story of how Brooks Douglass' parents were murdered and he and his sister, Leslie, were left for dead by two drifters in their Oklahoma City home in 1979. Mr. Douglass survived and went on to find professional success as a state senator in his home state where he authored landmark victim's rights legislation. Mr. Douglass wrote and produced the film and also played the part of his father. Mr. Douglas attended the screening and answered questions from the audience that evening. The event was sponsored by the City's Prosecuting Attorney Keith Kaneshiro with a portion of the proceeds going to the Sex Abuse Treatment Center of Hawai'i.



Senator Gabbard with Brooks Douglass, producer of "Heaven's Rain".

## Solutions to Up-Front Costs for Energy Efficiency

The following article I wrote was posted on the *Honolulu Civil Beat* on March 7<sup>th</sup>. Since the article was published, the on-bill financing concept has found new life in HB 1520 and we're hopeful it will pass this session.

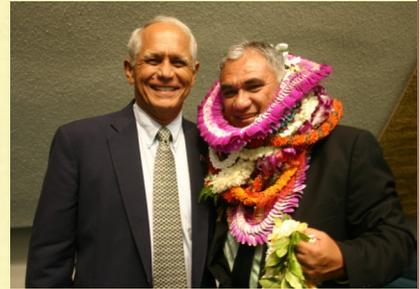
Each day the headlines scream at us from the highly volatile Middle East. And, as oil rises past \$100 a barrel, the voice is getting even louder. All Hawai'i residents are painfully aware that virtually everything we rely on for our daily needs — including gas, electricity, and food — is tied to the price of that dirty, black sludge. It's ridiculous for Hawai'i, with all our natural resources of sun, wind, geothermal, ocean thermal, and wave energy, to remain in such a vulnerable position as the most oil dependent state in the nation.

As Senate Energy and Environment Chair, I'm charged with moving the state toward a clean, renewable energy future. From this perspective, I'm always struck by the fact that although we have the highest energy costs in the country, most Hawai'i families haven't taken the basic clean energy steps of installing solar water heating systems or making energy savings changes in their homes.

In my view, there are several reasons for this. First, the up-front cost of energy efficiency measures can be substantial, and it's not always easy to compare this to the cost of doing nothing. Second, many properties are rentals, meaning the owner receives little benefit from investing in energy efficiency improvements. Meanwhile, renters who would benefit, can't be expected to upgrade homes they occupy only temporarily. Fortunately, there are policies that can address these issues. In fact, several have been considered by the Legislature over the last two sessions.

During the 2010 session, my colleagues and I worked on a bill, HB 1643, that would have let property owners pay off energy savings measures by increasing their property tax bills. Called "Property Assessed Clean Energy" (PACE), the idea was called one of the "Top 10 Breakthrough Ideas" for 2010 by the Harvard Business Review. HB 1643 would have allowed homeowners and small businesses to borrow money from the counties — who raised it by issuing bonds, not tax increases — to purchase renewable energy and energy efficiency systems and pay back the loan on their property tax bill. In doing so, government would be working together with the citizens of Hawai'i to reduce our dependence on imported foreign oil. (continued on next page)

## PHOTO GALLERY



Senator Gabbard congratulated Bill Aila for being unanimously confirmed as the Chairman of the Department of Land and Natural Resources by the Senate on March 3.



Senator Gabbard congratulated Gary Hooser upon his confirmation as the Director of the Office of Environmental Quality Control on March 14th.



Senator Gabbard congratulated Hermina Morita upon her confirmation as Public Utilities Commissioner on March 14th.



The State Senate honored the late Frenchy DeSoto and her ohana at the Capitol on March 8 for her significant contributions to the Native Hawaiian people and the state of Hawai'i.

## Solutions to Up-Front Costs for Energy Efficiency (continued)

HB 1643 passed the Senate, but got tripped up in the House when the mortgage industry objected that PACE liens would supercede the original mortgage lien in the event of a default. Soon after, PACE programs in 22 other states were halted based on this same concern, which was raised by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. At this point, the federal government will have to make the fix before we can get PACE back on track.

This year, as an alternative, I authored SB 182, which would have supported energy efficiency and solar through "on-bill financing." The measure directs the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to develop a plan to provide low-interest loans to residential electric customers interested in making energy-efficient upgrades or installing solar systems, which could be paid off on their electric bills. In essence, a portion of the customer's monthly savings is applied to repaying the loan over a set term, which will appear on the customer's bill as a financing charge. Because energy saving measures reduce the overall need to generate electricity, they lessen the need for new power plants and work to lower Hawai'i's crippling electricity costs. The magic is that the homeowner's energy savings typically exceed the financing cost, resulting in an immediate decrease in the cost of living.

Although it appears SB 182 isn't going to make it this session, I'm hopeful that we'll be able to get it moving in 2012. Meanwhile, another option we're considering this year, SB 704, helps reduce the red tape involved in letting the private sector provide similar services to homeowners. I introduced this bill to clarify the fact that companies that lease solar power systems to homeowners — systems that mitigate up-front costs and make solar more affordable — are not public utilities that need to be regulated by the PUC. This model, in which private sector firms lease PV systems to homeowners over a 20-year period at a reasonable cost, have been highly successful elsewhere. Like PACE and on-bill financing, these programs work by eliminating the need for homeowners to come up with cash up-front. The nice thing about these private programs is that the companies would be responsible for maintenance, repairs, monitoring, and insurance for the solar power systems.

All of these measures also help to resolve the landlord-tenant problem. This is because moving the loan repayment for renewable energy and energy efficiency measures on to a bill, be it the property tax or electric bill, accomplishes two things: it eliminates the need for the landlord to make any up-front payment and it clearly identifies the cost that a landlord can pass on to tenants. Meanwhile, tenants can see that they are receiving value in the form of reduced utility costs. If the renter moves, the charge remains tied to the meter, not the customer, and a new tenant assumes the bill. This encourages renters to participate because they pay for energy efficiency solutions only while they benefit from them. Landlords benefit from a wholly financed option to improve their properties.

Innovative tools like these will be critical for Hawai'i to achieve its clean energy goals. By removing the up-front cost of solar and energy efficiency, these financing options would make clean energy accessible to households from Hilo to Hanalei and from Honolulu to Hana.

These are "game-changing" policies that should be enacted in the near future.



Senator Gabbard helped serve out the plates for his "Taste of India" Hawai'i Foodbank Fundraiser in his State Capitol office on March 15th.



Senator Gabbard spoke with Kelli Abe Trifonovitch and Larry Sumida of UH West Oahu at the UH Open House during 2011 Senate Education Week at the State Capitol on March 14th.

The State Senate honored the State Sheriffs on their 165th Anniversary at the Capitol on March 23, 2011. Pictured (front row – L to R) are Senators Will Espero, Suzanne Chun Oakland, & Gilbert Kahele, retired Sheriff John Lum, Acting Sheriff Shawn Tsuha, retired Sheriff Charles Lacaden, and Senators Pohai Ryan, Malama Solomon, Donna Kim, Brickwood Galuteria, & Senator Ron Kouchi. On the back row (L to R) are Senators Maile Shimabukuro, Michelle Kidani, Mike Gabbard, Josh Green, Roz Baker, Clarence Nishihara, Kalani English, Carol Fukunaga, and Brian Taniguchi.



Senator Gabbard and wife, Carol, participated in the blessing and dedication of the farm at the Pacific Cultural Institute in Kaneohe on March 26. Above, celebrants are performing the traditional 'ava ceremony. At left, Senator Gabbard is partaking of the 'ava.

