



Legislative Update from...

# Senator Mike Gabbard

September  
2015

*Aloha e Friends,*

We fortunately escaped hurricanes Guillermo and Hilda, but were hit with some heavy rains by Tropical Depression Kilo, which found its way into my living room floor via a leaky roof. Hurricane Ignacio is weakening and Jimena is still looming farther to the east in the Pacific Ocean. Please keep emergency preparedness at the top of mind given that hurricane season doesn't end until November 30, 2015. This is why the Get Ready Ewa Beach – 5th Annual Emergency Preparedness Fair is an important event to attend. It's free and provides information on preparing for emergency situations. It will be on September 5th from 9am to 1pm at the Ewa Makai Middle School. For more information, email [getreadyewabeach@gmail.com](mailto:getreadyewabeach@gmail.com) or call 682-0111.

Feel free to contact me at 586-6830 or email [sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov) if I can help you or your family in any way. You can also follow me on Twitter [@senmikegabbard](https://twitter.com/senmikegabbard), Instagram [@sengabbard](https://www.instagram.com/sengabbard), and Facebook at [facebook.com/senmikegabbard](https://facebook.com/senmikegabbard).

*Mike*

## COMMITTEE CHAIR

Water, Land & Agriculture

## MEMBER

Transportation & Energy

Judiciary and Labor

Higher Education and the Arts

## District 20

Kapolei, Makakilo and portions of Ewa, Kalaeloa, and Waipahu



Sen. Gabbard held his Listen Story meeting Aug. 22 at Kapolei High School.

## "Listen Story" Meeting

I won't be hosting my Listen-Story meeting in September and October, but please stay tuned for future meeting dates.

## Land for East Kapolei High School

I met with Suzanne Case, the Director of the Department of Land and Natural Resources, on August 19 to discuss an issue that has come up regarding the site for the future East Kapolei High School. In 2013, the State Legislature appropriated \$5 million for the planning and design of the school. The Department of Education's plan is to build the school off Farrington Highway across the street from Tokai International College and UH West O'ahu. This is a great spot because it will encourage collaboration between the high school and the neighboring colleges. There's been some back and forth on whether DLNR would commit the 77-acre parcel of land for the high school, given that there could be commercial uses for the land. A big mahalo to Ms. Case, because she informed me at our meeting that DLNR is  
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## Aloha to UH West O'ahu Chancellor Rockne Freitas

I recently got word that UH West O'ahu Chancellor Rockne Freitas is retiring at the end of this year. Chancellor Freitas has served in the UH System for 23 years and has been UHWO Chancellor since 2013. He also had a successful career playing football in the NFL. I wish him the best in his next adventure!



Sen. Gabbard toured the Hilo Forest Reserve on August 7 with DLNR and colleagues. L-R: Emma Yuen, Div. of Forestry and Wildlife, DLNR; Nick Agorastos, Natural Area Reserves Mgr.; Sen. Gil Riviere; Sen. Laura Thielen; Sen. Mike Gabbard; Sen. Russell Ruderman; Jim Cogswell, Wildlife Program Mgr; Joey Mello, Wildlife Mgr; Jay Hatayama, Forestry Manager; Steve Bergfeld, Branch Mgr.

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willing to give the DOE at least half of the 77-acres. This will make the school a reality and will help address overcrowding at area high schools and allow for continued growth of our community. Our next task will be working to get the construction funding for the high school in the state budget.



Sen. Gabbard toured the Nene Recovery Site on Aug. 18, 2015. Nene is Hawaii's official state bird and in danger of extinction.

### **Hawai'i Conservation Conference and Site Tours**

I spoke at the 23rd annual Hawaii Conservation Conference on August 6 at UH Hilo. This event brings together over 1,000 natural and cultural resource managers, scientists, community members, students, and educators who work together for the protection and stewardship of Hawaiian ecosystems. As the new Water, Land, and Agriculture Committee Chair, I'm doing site tours across the state to see DLNR programs up close. On August 7, I went on a site tour of the Big Island and visited the Hilo Forest Reserve & Nene Recovery Site, Upper Waieka Forest Reserve/Timber Mgt. Area, and Kulani-Pu'u Maka'ala Natural Area Reserve. On August 18, I visited the Super Sucker in Kaneohe Bay with the DLNR Aquatic Resources team. In 2005, The Nature Conservancy partnered with DLNR to develop the Super Sucker, which can remove more than 1,000 pounds of invasive algae an hour; it has removed more than

1 million pounds of algae from Kaneohe Bay since it came online. Here's how it works: two divers equipped with a 100-foot hose go below the ocean surface and feed the invasive algae into a vacuum, which sucks it up to a sorting platform where it is placed into bags, dried and distributed to local farmers for fertilizer. The Super Sucker crew then seed the reefs with native sea urchins that feed on the algae and keep it from growing back. It was fun jumping in the water and seeing them sucking up "smothering seaweed" which multiplies very rapidly and destroys coral reefs.

### **Kalaeloa Boulevard Improvements Happening**

The Kapolei Properties Division of the James Campbell Company and the City and County of Honolulu announced on August 11th that they are partnering on a \$50 million investment to improvement Kalaeloa Boulevard in Kapolei. The project will include the widening of Kalaeloa Boulevard and the construction of a new waste water pump station and sewer system. Kalaeloa Boulevard is a key artery for our island's economic engine because it handles 40,000 cars a day traveling to and from Kapolei Business Park, Campbell Industrial Park, and Kalaeloa Harbor. The project is slated to be completed by 2018.

### **Enterprise Energy Corridor to Improve Electricity in Kalaeloa**

In 2014, I worked with my colleagues to secure a \$7 million appropriation for the Enterprise Energy Corridor, which will bring HECO power into Kalaeloa starting at Kapolei Parkway and ending at Midway Road fronting the Kalaeloa Airport. As you may know, the Kalaeloa community is supplied power by Naval Facilities. The problem is that the Navy has made little investment in the electrical infrastructure over the last 15 years. This means that the residents and business of Kalaeloa suffer frequent power outages. My office has been working closely with the FBI, Hawai'i Community Development Authority, Department of Land and Natural Resources & its State Historic Preservation Division, and the Department of Transportation to ensure that this project moves forward as quickly as possible. There have been concerns expressed by the FBI that their critically important operations, which are based in Kalaeloa, are being negatively impacted by the current electrical system. The plan is to have bids for the project open on September 3rd, construction begin by December 2015, and have the project completed by April 2016.

## Efforts to Address Ho'okele Traffic Issue

There have been traffic issues since the opening of the new Ho'okele Elementary School in Kapolei on Kapolei Parkway. Since the school opened on July 29th, DR Horton Schuler has been paying for special duty HPD officers and State Sheriffs for both morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up times to assist with traffic. Currently there's one road into the Mehana community, Kunehi Street. DR Horton Schuler is building a second access, Kama'aha Avenue Extension, to be completed in November 2015. This second access will alleviate some of the backlog that builds on Kunehi to get into Kapolei Parkway.

## Looking for "Out of the Box" Solutions for Capitol Reflecting Pools

You might have seen the Reflecting Pools at the State Capitol. Usually people take notice of the bad smell coming from the water and the unsightly algae. Coupled with the fact that the pool has leaked many times, causing damage to the Capitol building make it imperative that we fix the situation. I'm heading up an informal working group with Senator Will Espero, the Department of Accounting and General Services, the State Historical Preservation Division (SHPD), and folks from the private sector to focus on this issue. To just do needed renovations, it would take upwards of \$10 million. It also costs roughly \$75,000 annually to do maintenance on the pools, which are 75,000 square feet total size. That's why we're looking for "out of the box" solutions to this long-existing problem. One piece of good news is that SHPD has notified us that we don't necessarily have to leave the water in the Reflecting Pools as long as we keep to the existing theme. For many years, people had been under the impression that the water had to remain because of the fact that the Reflecting Pools are on both the State and Federal Historical Registers. In 2013, I introduced SB 21 to appropriate \$11.5 million to make improvements to the Reflecting Pools. My bill would have required the incorporation of a natural filtration system using native plants, but it didn't pass. Please let me know if you have any creative ideas!

## State Looking to Regulate Uber and Lyft

Many of you may have gotten a ride around town or while vacationing on the mainland from companies, like Uber and Lyft. These transportation networking companies (TNCs) make it easy to get a ride using your smart phone. Most of their drivers work part-time and use their own cars. However, in the past few years, there has been some controversy surrounding these companies from taxi cab companies who see them as competitors and insurance companies that want to make sure proper insurance coverage is in place. There are now 25 states around the country, which have stepped in to regulate the TNCs. Last session, SB 1280, a bill to do the same here, was debated at the Legislature and got very close to passing. I did support SB 1280 because these companies do need to be regulated. I've heard a lot about the different controversies around the country, such as what's happening in California with the lawsuits involving Uber's background checks. We need to make sure that there are good background checks, there's appropriate insurance coverage in place, and there's proper government oversight. At the same time, the way we do business is changing and we need to encourage innovation like ride-sharing and not stifle competition. I'm hopeful that companies like Uber and Lyft, the insurance companies, and the taxi companies can come to a compromise that works for all parties so that we can get some solid legislation in place. I'm definitely committed as Vice Chair of the Transportation and Energy Committee in making this happen.



Sen. Gabbard spoke with Kapolei Middle School students, along with 10th graders from their partnership school in Okinawa, on August 4, 2015, during their tour of the Hawai'i State Capitol.

### Focus on Fresh Water

I met with Josh Stanbro of the Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) on August 25th to discuss fresh water issues. HCF was a key player in launching the Hawai'i Fresh Water Initiative in 2013 with the goal of increasing water security for the Hawaiian Islands. The Initiative relied on a blue ribbon advisory panel called the Fresh Water Council. Their single goal is to create 100 million gallons per day in additional, reliable fresh water capacity for our islands by 2030.

The three aggressive water strategy areas:

1. Conservation – improve the efficiency of our population's total daily fresh groundwater use rate by 8% from the current 330 gallons per day per person to 305 gallons per person per day. By 2030, this goal will provide 40 million gallons a day in increased water availability.

2. Recharge – increase Hawaii's ability to capture rainwater in key aquifer areas by improving storm water capture and nearly doubling the size of our actively protected watershed areas. By 2030, this goal will provide 30 million gallons a day in increased water availability.

3. Reuse – more than double the amount of wastewater currently being reused in the islands to 50 million gallons a day in increased water availability.

I plan to make fresh water a major focus in my new role as Chair of the Water, Land, and Agriculture Committee.



### Honoring Vailima and Jerry Watson

I got the opportunity to surprise some "old tennis buddies", Vailima and Jerry Watson, with an honorary certificate from the State Senate at the Kalihi District Park tennis courts on August 13th. In 1991, Ms. Watson stepped forward to help launch the Kalihi Youth Tennis Program at Kōkua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Family Services (KKV) to help the young people in that community. For 25 years, Vailima and her husband, Jerry Watson, have mentored over 1,000 youth of all ages, providing the attention, and care Kalihi youth need and deserve. Through tennis, they uplift each participant's talents and greater potential, against a backdrop of sportsmanship and fun. Since 2006, the Watsons have also coached the Farrington High School tennis team. With their "no cut" policy, all youth are welcome and no one is turned away from the opportunity to learn, practice and compete. Partnering with schools, parks, and athletic leagues and clubs, the program has produced USTA Jr. Team Tennis teams known for their sportsmanship. Youth are provided with character-building experiences through health education, social development lessons, and community service. Team members are expected to keep up their grades, fulfill team commitments, and help out in community service projects year-round. Mahalo to the Watsons for their accomplishments in nurturing and preparing the future leaders of our community. Their humility, grounded in faith and love, is a model to inspire us all.

Sen. Gabbard toured the Super Sucker operation in Kaneohe Bay On Aug. 18, where more than 1,000 pounds of Invasive algae can be removed in an hour.

