

MAR 11 2022

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# SENATE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU TO CONDUCT A STUDY  
ON THE BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF IMPLEMENTING A UNICAMERAL  
LEGISLATURE IN HAWAII.

1           WHEREAS, many Hawaii residents have expressed growing  
2 concern about the accessibility and accountability of the  
3 State's government; and  
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5           WHEREAS, part of that concern stems from the structure of  
6 the State's legislative body; and  
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8           WHEREAS, Hawaii's Legislature is bicameral, comprising two  
9 independent chambers; and  
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11           WHEREAS, the bicameral legislative structure provides a  
12 system of checks and balances that facilitates deliberation,  
13 safeguards against the passage of carelessly-drafted  
14 legislation, and promotes open government by affording citizens  
15 the opportunity to express their opinions; and  
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17           WHEREAS, the bicameral system also has drawbacks, including  
18 duplicative committee structures, staffing, and bills; and  
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20           WHEREAS, in recent years, the bicameral system in Hawaii  
21 has become cumbersome and inefficient, leading to growing public  
22 concern about the accessibility and accountability of the  
23 State's government; and  
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25           WHEREAS, procedures and policies differ among the two  
26 legislative chambers, sometimes substantially, making it  
27 confusing, time-consuming, and difficult for citizens to  
28 participate; and  
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30           WHEREAS, the two legislative chambers often take opposing  
31 positions on issues, resulting in inaction or decisions being  
32 made in conference committees without public testimony; and  
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34           WHEREAS, a unicameral legislature could eliminate  
35 duplicative work; and



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2 WHEREAS, a unicameral legislature could also result in an  
3 immediate cost savings if fewer legislators are constitutionally  
4 permitted; and

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6 WHEREAS, in *Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. 533 (1964), the  
7 United States Supreme Court ruled that the electoral districts  
8 of state legislative chambers must be roughly equal in  
9 population; and

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11 WHEREAS, in the time since the Court's decision in  
12 *Reynolds*, it may no longer be necessary for the Senate to act as  
13 a counterbalance between the representation of large towns and  
14 cities and the representation of smaller rural communities; and

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16 WHEREAS, given these factors, Hawaii may benefit from a  
17 unicameral legislature, which, in the United States, is  
18 currently only used in Nebraska; now, therefore,

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20 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first  
21 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2022,  
22 that the Legislative Reference Bureau is requested to conduct a  
23 study on the benefits and drawbacks of implementing a unicameral  
24 legislature in Hawaii; and

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26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study is requested to  
27 include a review of the history of unicameral legislatures in  
28 America, including the history of Nebraska's conversion from a  
29 bicameral system to a unicameral system, and the recent  
30 experiences of Minnesota and other states that are considering  
31 implementing unicameral legislatures; and

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33 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study is also requested to  
34 address the likely effects of implementing a unicameral  
35 legislature in Hawaii on:

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37 (1) The representativeness and responsiveness of the  
38 Legislature;  
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40 (2) The stability of the law;  
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42 (3) The accountability of legislators;



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- (4) The authority of legislators;
- (5) The concentration of power within the Legislature;
- (6) The quality of legislative decision making;
- (7) The efficiency and economy of the Legislature; and
- (8) Legislative custom and precedent; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Reference Bureau is requested to submit a report to this body no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2023; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the Director of the Legislative Reference Bureau.

OFFERED BY:

*Kurt Ferolla*

By Request

