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STATE SENATOR
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COMMITTEE CHAIR: Agriculture & Environment

MEMBER: Judiciary Committee; Government Operations Committee

Serving District 20: Kapolei, Makakilo, and portions of Ewa, Kalaeloa, and Waipahu

Aloha e Friends,

I hope you and your 'ohana are well. I extend my very best wishes, aloha, and Happy New Year! While 2020 has brought many challenges, I'm hopeful that in 2021 we'll get to see a light at the end of the tunnel. I'm happy to report that on December 27 President Trump signed a pandemic relief bill that provides needed assistance for families and businesses. Part of the bill includes disbursement of a second stimulus check of up to \$600 for eligible adults, plus \$600 per dependent child. Eligibility is based on your 2019 adjusted gross income. Individuals who earned up to \$75,000 will be eligible for the full \$600 payment, while those making between \$75,000 and \$87,000 will receive reduced amounts. Individuals started receiving their second stimulus check in late-December. The 2021 Legislative session starts on January 20. Unfortunately, the Capitol will remain closed to the public because of COVID-19, so there'll be no Opening Day festivities. In addition, we'll have live testimony via Zoom instead of in-person at the Capitol.

As always, please contact me at (808) 586-6830 or 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 [@GabbardAloha](https://www.instagram.com/GabbardAloha), or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/senmikegabbard>.

Me ke aloha pumehana,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike".

Listen-Story Meeting

I'll be hosting a virtual Listen Story meeting on Saturday, February 6, 9am-10am via Zoom. I'll send out the Zoom link to my constituent email list closer to the date. If you want to be added to the invite list, let me know.



Sen. Gabbard helped deliver hundreds of brand-new toys to the Onelauena and Onemalu transitional shelters in Kalaeloa on Dec. 23, 2020. (Pictured L-R: Jr. Rich Allen, Vice Pound Keeper and Military Order of Devil Dogs Hawai'i Pound 393; Commander Vernon Jarvis AMVETS Post III; Kealahou West O'ahu, Executive Director, Tanya Tehotu; David Monalim; Sen. Gabbard; and Carl Vincenti USMC retired volunteer.)

Toys for Tots! in Kalaeloa

They say the spirit of Christmas is meant for keiki and after my visit to the Onelauena and Onemalu transitional shelters in Kalaeloa, that saying certainly held true... It was a very special Christmas afternoon watching the faces of keiki and grownups alike light up with joy as we distributed hundreds of brand-new toys to the families at the shelters on December 23. Mahalo nui loa to Kealahou West O’ahu, Executive Director, Tanya Tehotu; Service Director, Danni Duseigneur; and all the staff who participated in helping make this day happen.

And of course, a most special mahalo to Commander Vernon Jarvis AMVETS Post III; Jr. Vice Pound Keeper, Rich Allen, Military Order of Devil Dogs Hawai’i Pound 393; and Carl Vincenti USMC retired volunteer, for reaching out to me with generous donations from the American Legion, Marine Corps League, AmVets Post #3, Veterans Movement Foundation, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Toys for Tots!



Sen. Gabbard toured the Kauhale Tiny Home Project in Kalaeloa on Dec. 18, 2020. (Pictured: Sen. Gabbard and Nani Medeiros, Executive Director of HomeAid Hawai’i.)

Kauhale Tour

You may have heard of “tiny homes” but did you know this concept has expanded to help provide a solution to the problem of homelessness? Well, the Kauhale Tiny Home project in Kalaeloa (a few hundred yards from where I live) is doing just that. Lead by an extraordinary individual, Executive Director of the project’s developer, [HomeAid Hawai’i](#), Nani Medeiros (pictured), who recently invited me to tour the area to learn more about the project first-hand. HomeAid Hawai’i is a 501c-3 non-profit founded by O’ahu’s developers and building industry whose goal is to help address homelessness by providing professional pro-bono construction services to renovate existing structures or build new housing. What I saw of the project so far definitely impressed me. The 36 tiny homes being built (each just under 100 sq. feet) are located on 1 ½ acres that will contain community gardens and a common space. The cost for materials and labor for each tiny house is estimated at \$20,000, including solar-powered air conditioning and electricity. A renovated, former Navy warehouse will provide a communal kitchen, bathrooms, laundry, medical clinic, and communal areas. Residents will pay monthly rents of approximately \$200 to \$300. The project is being developed by HomeAid Hawai’i largely through donations. Once completed (estimated completion end of February 2021), it will be run by U.S. Vets located next door. This is an incredible project, modeled after a homeless program in Austin, TX, which focuses on micro-housing units and social services. Lt. Governor Green proposes a total of 11 of these Kauhale projects around the state, including Waimanalo, Wai’anae, Kaka’ako, Kona, and Hilo, with hopes to expand the idea to four more O’ahu locations in 2020 and then onto the neighbor islands in 2021.



Sen. Gabbard attended virtually the GoFarm Hawai’i’s Growing Veterans Graduation on

December 12, 2020. (Pictured L-R: GoFarm Veteran Participants: Jen Chon, Jeff Hamilton, Jason Fleck, Maricar Souza.)

GoFarm Hawai'i Growing Veterans Program Graduation

I participated via Zoom in GoFarm Hawai'i's Growing Veterans Graduation on December 12. Ho'ōla Farms, in partnership with GoFarm Hawai'i, proudly graduated its first cohort of veterans from AgXcel; a hands-on production agriculture training program. I presented Honorary Certificates from the State Senate to veteran participants, Maricar Souza, Jason Fleck, Jen Chon, and Jeff Hamilton, and also Tara Waller, the Ho'ōla Farms Program Lead and Veteran Liaison and Britton Price, the GoFarm Farm Coach. The Certificate of Professional Development indicates each veteran successfully completed the requirements of the program and has learned or been introduced to farm management, business, and practical skills to run a successful production agriculture business in Hawai'i.

Topics covered throughout the 6-month training program include agroforestry, farming models, farm safety, plant anatomy, crop planting & nutrients, pest management, composting, recording-keeping, and food safety. Business skills and practical knowledge such as financial operations, marketing, value-added product, day-to-day business operations, and equipment operation, provided a well-rounded program for participants. The final project included each veteran launching a 7-week CSA (community-supported agriculture) program where they provided large bags of produce to customers within our community. This cohort was designed specifically for veterans and included access to health and wellness programs along with agriculture training and business skills development.

Ho'ōla Veteran Services was established in 2015 to provide agriculture educational training and hands-on experiences for veterans, caregivers, and their families in hopes of creating a more sustainable future and well-being for all. GoFarm Hawai'i: Growing Veterans is a pilot program funded by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The program received an AgVets grant to combine GoFarm Hawai'i's proven 6-month training program for commercial agriculture production with essential health and human services from Ho'ōla Farms' wellness programs to support veterans in their entrepreneurial ventures and personal lives. It was a tremendous success. Congratulations to all the graduates!



Sen. Gabbard took part in the “Drive Thru” Curb Side-Pick Up Food Distribution event in Kapolei on Dec. 12, 2020. (Pictured: Sen. Gabbard, Patty Teruya, Rep. Kurt Fevella.)

“DriveThru” Curb Side-Pick Up Food Distribution

On December 12, I took part in the “Drive-Thru” Curb Side-Pick Up Food Distribution event at the old Kmart parking lot in Kapolei. It took many hands to coordinate and implement this wonderful event, and I’m grateful to have been a part of it. Many mahalos to Patty Teruya for organizing this event for our community, along with support from Word of Life West O’ahu, Wai’anae Coast Community Foundation, Hawai’i Foodbank, Ewa Lions Club, and Campbell Estates.

Mahalo to my colleagues, Senator Donovan Dela Cruz and Senator Kurt Fevella for stopping by and working the line with me and the other amazing volunteers. I also want to mahalo UH West O’ahu, Message of Peace Ministry Outreach (MOPMO), and Ho’ola Clean N Sober House for Men for their support. Over 600 vehicles came through to receive food for their families for the holiday season. Great job everyone!



Sen. Gabbard toured MetroGrow’s indoor, vertical agricultural facility in Kaka’ako on Dec. 14, 2020. (Pictured: Sen. Gabbard and Kerry Kakazu, Founder MetroGrow Hawai’i.)

MetroGrow Hawai’i Facility Tour

As the Chair of the Agriculture and Environment Committee, I continue to look for ways to grow and support agriculture in our state. On December 14, I toured MetroGrow’s indoor, vertical agricultural facility in Kaka’ako. Utilizing efficient farming technologies like aeroponics and hydroponics, MetroGrow can grow high-quality produce in a controlled environment for restaurant and gourmet markets. Because they can fine-tune temperature, lighting, humidity, and plant nutrients, they can get higher yields and consistent tastes—difficult to reproduce on a traditional farm!

Founder Kerry Kakazu is leading the charge in urban vertical farming in Hawai’i, producing a variety of lettuce and other leafy greens for local businesses. MetroGrow Hawai’i takes an alternative path from traditional field farming, typically requiring acres of land, by leveraging hydroponic technologies that rely less on soil. Plants are grown in small indoor temperature-controlled rooms and fed a nutrient mist under LED lights. The end result is a product that requires less land, water, and time while generating produce free of pests or the need for

pesticides. Related to this, in 2019, I helped shepherd House Bill 452 (Act 203) through the legislative process. This law directs the Public Utilities Commission to establish preferential electricity rates for agriculture projects, such as MetroGrow. To date, these new rates are still being worked on by HECO, but will hopefully come to fruition in 2021.



Sen. Gabbard virtually attended the 2020 Ala I ka Holomua Pathway to Success Program ceremony on Dec. 15, 2020.

2020 Ala I ka Holomua Pathway to Success Program

As a former educator, I wholeheartedly support initiatives that help our keiki grow and become the best they can be. On December 15, I had the honor to virtually attend the 2020 Ala I ka Holomua Pathway to Success Program ceremony, celebrating 58 students for their accomplishment of completing the program. I presented Honorary Certificates from the State Senate to each of them.

The Ala I ka Holomua Pathway to Success Program is an early college partnership between the Academy for Creative Media at the University of Hawai'i West O'ahu, James Campbell High

School, Kapolei High School, Wai'anae High School, and Waipahu High School. This innovative program is designed to foster college and career readiness, cultivate in students the skills needed to succeed as individuals, and contribute to Hawai'i's workforce development in the field of Creative Media. With the support of a grant-in-aid by the Legislature in 2019, the Ala I ka Holomua Pathway to Success Program offers high school students the opportunity to not only obtain college credits but also develop the latest creative media skills necessary to succeed, along with learning the traits required to tackle the economic challenges of the 21st century.

The 2020 Ala I ka Holomua Pathway to Success Program participants showed an incredible amount of grit, resolve, creativity, and flexibility while overcoming the obstacles of these uncertain times. Congratulations to all participants for completing the program! We look forward to your future endeavors and successes.

Makakilo Elementary - Toy Donation



Sen. Gabbard, along with the gentlemen pictured, delivered brand new toys to Makakilo Elementary School on Dec. 23, 2020. Many mahalos to these volunteers for their generous donation of time and toys! (Pictured L-R: Commander Vernon Jarvis AMVETS Post III; Jr. Vice Pound Keeper, Rich Allen, Military Order of Devil Dogs Hawai'i Pound 393; Lika Taumanupepe,

PCNC (Parent-Community Networking Center) Facilitator for Makakilo Elementary School; Sen. Gabbard; Principal Raechelle Fabrao; and Carl Vincenti USMC retired volunteer.)



Sen.

Gabbard co-chaired an informational briefing on December 9, 2020 to get an update on Act 90.

Act 90 Informational Briefing

I co-chaired an informational briefing as Chair of the Agriculture and Environment Committee with Senator Lorraine Inouye, Chair of the Water and Land Committee on December 9 to get an update from the Department of Land and Natural Resources on progress being made on the fulfillment of the goals laid out in Act 90, a law from 2003. Act 90 was enacted to transfer certain non-agricultural park lands from the DLNR to the Department of Agriculture and stipulated that the transfer of the lands had to be mutually agreed upon by DLNR and HDOA. There was no deadline for the transfer of lands to happen. Many lessees, primarily farmers and ranchers, with large acreage of land have already been notified by HDOA that their land leases were to be transferred to and managed by HDOA. However, seventeen years later, DLNR has not yet transferred much of the land.

To date, DLNR has transferred 19,000 acres of land to HDOA. This is only 15% of the lands covered under Act 90 that is leased or permitted for agriculture production. This issue is very difficult and pulls me in opposite directions. On the one hand, I want us to expand agriculture

and look at this industry as a way to stimulate and diversify our economy amid COVID. At the same time, I support the conservation of our lands and reforestation. Hearing the testimony and getting input from the departments, I sincerely believe that we need additional legislation to improve upon Act 90. I'm hopeful that continuing discussions on this issue will lead to some potential ideas that help us produce a bill in 2021—a win-win, compromise, that DLNR, HDOA, the ranchers, and conservationists can live with.



Avoid opening or responding to text messages and e-mails with hyperlinks about COVID-19 from unknown sources.

COVID-19 Vaccine Scams

As many people look for solutions to the many challenges that COVID-19 has caused, it's important to be aware of the potential scams that are out there. The state Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs Office of Consumer Protection reminds us to avoid opening or responding to text messages and e-mails with hyperlinks about COVID-19 from unknown sources as it may lead to malware that can allow scammers to access private information through your electronic device. The best practice is to simply ignore or hang up on anyone offering unsolicited services. Suspicious calls or scam attempts may be reported to OCP at 587-5272 and the Federal Trade Commission online at <http://ReportFraud.ftc.gov>. Stay safe.



Kapolei Casino is Bad Idea

As you may be well aware, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands Commission voted 5-4 on December 22 to approve a legislative proposal to authorize limited casino gaming in the form of a single integrated resort property in Kapolei. While I can appreciate DHHL's effort to identify revenue-generating sources, I'm in strong opposition to their proposal to build a casino in Kapolei. I'd instead encourage DHHL to focus on those kinds of projects to raise revenue which are less controversial and have less of a social impact. Gambling is a unique issue in our state for bringing together the right and left of the political spectrum in opposition. Many social ills are associated with gambling and it's simply not a good fit for the growing city of Kapolei, or for that matter, anywhere else in Hawai'i. DHHL's proposal brings up many legal questions at the state level and even the federal level, given the fact that Native Hawaiians have still not received federal recognition like Native Americans.

Community outreach is something that DHHL would need to do on a proposal like this and I haven't seen any evidence yet that that's happened. I reached out to some DHHL beneficiaries in my community and I heard from some who are opposed to the casino project and others who said that they want to get more input. Please consider providing testimony if and when the bill is scheduled to be heard in committee. I'll keep you updated with additional information as we progress through the session.