

Aloha e Friends,

The 2021 legislative session concluded on April 29. We were fortunate to get through the session without any COVID-related outbreaks.

One of our big actions right at the end was to pass Senate Bill 1350, which delays pay raises for the Governor, Lt. Governor, judges, state agency executive officers, and legislators until January 1, 2023. This was the right thing to do, given our economic situation.

My next "Listen Story" meeting will be May 8, where I'll give a wrap-up of what happened this session.

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>.

Best wishes to you and your 'ohana.

Me ke aloha pumehana,




COMMITTEE CHAIR

AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

MEMBER

- ◆ Judiciary
- ◆ Government Operations

DISTRICT 20

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

Listen-Story Meeting

You're invited to join my Virtual Listen Story community meeting on Saturday, May 8, 9-10am. A reminder to my constituent email list will be sent out closer to the date. If you want to be added to the invite list, email sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov and I'll send you the Zoom link.

Kapolei High School Classroom Renovations Funding Released

On April 16, 2021, I was pleased to receive a memo from Governor Ige informing me that he had released \$6 million to finance the design and construction for classroom renovations at Kapolei High School. Mahalo to Governor Ige for helping to support our district and our keiki!



Construction Funding for Senate District 20

I was also pleased we were able to secure \$40,632,000 in the state biennium budget for Fiscal Year 2021-2023 for the benefit of Senate District 20.

Here's a quick rundown of that funding:

- ⇒ Farrington Highway Widening, Kapolei Golf Course to Fort Weaver Road - \$25 million
- ⇒ East Kapolei Transit Oriented Development and Telcom Instructure - \$5,132,000
- ⇒ East Kapolei Elementary, Ho'opili – New School Design - \$4 million
- ⇒ University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu Renewal Projects - \$3.5 million
- ⇒ East Kapolei IIC Site Construction for the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands - \$2 million
- ⇒ East Kapolei High School – New School Planning - \$500,000
- ⇒ Kapolei High School, Additional Restrooms - \$500,000

My 2021 Bills That Passed the House and Senate

Below is an overview of the six bills I authored this session which passed both chambers. Dates to look out for:

June 21 – deadline for Governor to inform the Legislature of his intent to veto and **July 6** – deadline for Governor to sign bills into law, let them become law without his signature, or veto.

Agriculture Loans (SB 336)

Currently, agricultural loans of \$25,000 or more are subject to the approval of the Hawai'i Board of Agriculture. This bill streamlines the process for smaller agricultural loans by increasing the \$25,000 threshold to \$50,000 and allows loans up to this amount to be approved by the Director of the Department of Agriculture (HDOA) without Board input.

The current law hasn't been updated since the 1980s and HDOA wants to amend the law to meet the needs of 21st century farmers. It makes sense to give HDOA more flexibility to provide small scale ag loans to farmers, especially in these hard-economic times.

Animal Sex Assault (SB 343)

Bestiality is banned in 46 states, but not in Hawai'i. A study of more than 44,000 adult male sex offenders concluded that the sexual assault of an animal is the strongest predictor of the sexual assault of a child.

Some studies have also drawn connections between the sexual assault of animals and serial homicide. This bill prohibits the sexual assault of an animal, and will make it a Class C felony offense. In

addition to the Class C felony, if the act is committed in front of a minor, or if a minor was subjected to sexual contact with an animal, the offense will be a Class B felony.

Cruelty-Free Cosmetics (SB 345)

With modern testing methods, we no longer need to test cosmetic products on animals. Plus, today's methods are more accurate and efficient.

Non-animal testing methods spare significant numbers of animals from pain, distress, and death. In addition, non-animal testing methods have higher relevance for humans compared to tests on animals, and ensure better protection of human health.

SB 345 would prohibit cosmetic manufacturers from selling in the state any cosmetic product involving new animal testing beginning on January 1, 2022. This bill would make our state one of just six states (including California, Illinois, Nevada, Virginia, and Maryland) to pass such a law. We would also join over 40 countries around the world that have restricted animal testing for cosmetics in recent years.

Aluminum Cans (SB 348)

Did you know that Hawai'i is the only state in the country that has an antiquated law which prohibits carbonated soft drink, juice, and beer operations from using the same equipment to can noncarbonated bottled water?!

This is crazy because companies like Ball Corporation and Maui Brewing Company, could be selling bottled water in aluminum cans which would greatly reduce the use of plastic bottles. Unlike plastic bottles, 100%

of the aluminum can is recycled. This bill would repeal an outdated law, allowing us to reduce single-use plastic and save companies millions of dollars.

Beach Restoration (SB 367)



According to a 2012 study by the University of Hawai'i and the US Geological Survey, 70% of beaches in Hawai'i are eroding.

Burdensome regulations and permit requirements for the beach restoration and maintenance projects discourage and prevent individuals, community organizations, and government agencies from initiating beach restoration projects. This bill would waive the Section 401 water quality certification requirement for beach restoration and management projects that have received notice of authorization to proceed from DLNR's small scale beach restoration program. With this bill, DLNR would be able to issue permits for 5 years for these beach restorations.



Greenhouse (SB 489)

The bill would expand the allowable size of agricultural shade cloth, cold frame and greenhouse structures from 20,000 sq. ft. to 60,000 ft., enabling farmers to benefit from economies of scale and expand their produce production. As stated in UH College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources' testimony: "Given the known advantage of such structures, this bill has the potential to have a significantly large effect on Hawai'i agriculture."

Prenatal to Preschool Baby Fair Coming in May

Family Expositions will be hosting a Prenatal to Preschool Baby Fair at Ka Makana Ali'i Shopping Center on May 14 and May 15 from 11am to 6pm. The fair will spotlight local vendors as well as an array of new products, services, and information relating to babies, toddlers, and parents. If you plan on attending, the organizers of the event ask that you please register online at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/>

Celebrating Happy Hemp Aloha Friday



(Pictured L-R: Sen. Laura Acasio, Rep. Tina Wildberger, Rep. Patrick Branco, Sen. Mike Gabbard, Rep. Bert Kobayashi, Rep. Della Au Belatti, Sen. Joy San Buenaventura)

On April 23, my colleagues and I celebrated Happy Hemp Aloha Friday at the Capitol. Did you know that there are over 25,000 uses for hemp, including: building materials like hempcrete and textile, fuel oil, plastic alternatives; food and nutritional supplements (great source of protein, mineral and fiber), lotions, cosmetics, and hair care? In addition, hemp purifies soil and water by removing toxins and heavy metals. During the 2020 session, we passed legislation that now allows Hawai'i farmers to apply to the USDA for licenses to grow, process, and sell hemp products. There are currently 70 licensed hemp farmers statewide. Mark my words...Hawai'i nei will become the hemp capitol of the world. **Hemp, Hemp Hooray!**

Coral Restoration – What We Can Do to Help

In early April of this year, I came across an article in Midweek authored by Damien Beri, President of The Coral Conservancy—a nonprofit started by Damien in 2020. He's working to create a training platform, which will enable residents to engage in "community coral restoration events." In the article, Damien explains that thousands of rare and endemic Hawaiian corals are trampled and killed each year by tourists, yet there remains no stable platform, agency or methods to save these creatures. Furthermore, Damien reveals that the current cost of coral restoration conducted by the state is over \$3,000 per coral colony, and each of the coral grown had to have some source amount taken from the wild to seed the colony. There's currently no community restoration program in Hawai'i. The Coral Conservancy is about to begin their first pilot project and are looking for volunteers. You can learn more by e-mailing damienberi@thecoralconservancy.org, or calling (917) 543-2164.

Celebrating Earth Day 2021

I was recently interviewed by Blue Zones Hawai'i on how and why my wife and I started a garden. In honor of Earth Day, I shared a brief clip on my social media. You can also view it on my YouTube channel: <http://bit.ly/earthday808>

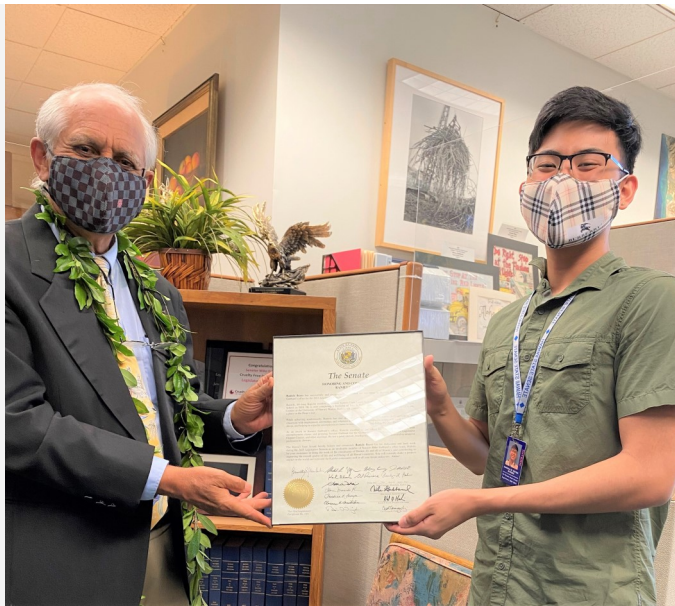
In addition to the video, I made some remarks during our April 22 evening floor session at the Capitol, honoring Earth Day 2021: "Mr. President and Colleagues, as I'm sure you're aware, today is Earth Day, actually Earth Night now. Earth Day was first held on April 22, 1970 and is dedicated to raising awareness about environmental protection.

It now includes a wide range of events coordinated globally by earthday.org including 1 billion people in more than 193 countries. Yesterday, Governor Ige was part of a virtual discussion with other governors on how states and the Biden Administration can expand economic opportunity through



collaborative climate action. And President Biden is now pledging to cut U.S. greenhouse emissions at least in half by 2030.

As your environment chair for 12 years, mahalo nui to you all for supporting malama 'āina legislation this session and over the years! Aloha."



Big Mahalo to UH Manoa Intern, Raniele Reyes!

There's a saying that an organization is only as good as its staff. I truly believe this, and I'm very appreciative of my staff for helping me make this 2021 Legislative session a success!

This year, I was fortunate to have an exceptional University of Hawai'i Manoa Intern, Raniele Reyes, join our office 'ohana. A life-long Kapolei resident, Raniele graduated Summa Cum Laude with academic honors from Kapolei High School in 2018. He's now completing a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Philippine Language and Culture at UH Manoa.

Raniele has continued to excel in his studies with a 3.85 GPA and a place on the Dean's List. While achieving academically, Raniele has also dedicated himself to gaining valuable skills outside of the classroom with employment, internships, and volunteer work on political campaigns, community food distribution drives, and helping to expedite unemployment claims to assist those struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Raniele excelled in the office by assisting constituents with unemployment claims and prepping me for the Government Affairs Committee, the Legislative Filipino Caucus, and other meetings. He's intelligent, has a good attitude and will be very successful in whatever profession he chooses. Mahalo, Raniele!

Mahalo!

Urging Congress to Consider Funding Coastal Restoration Projects

In addition to introducing Senate Bill 367, which supports beach restoration, on April 26, I also signed on to a letter urging Congress to include \$10 billion in funding with no matching requirements for state coastal restoration projects in upcoming infrastructure or stimulus initiatives.

Over 130 members of the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators, representing 19 coastal states, signed the letter. According to the letter to Congress, "Coastal states are home to about 40% of the population in the United States and are a major economic contributor nationwide.

Simultaneously, coastal communities are severely, and often disparately, impacted by the effects of climate change, including sea-level rise, increased storm events, loss of marine and coastal habitats, coastal pollution, and lost tourism.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened these effects and underscored the need for federal funding to help preserve critical habitats, protect coastal communities, decrease greenhouse gases, and create thousands of jobs. Healthy coastal habitats protect coastlines from storms and hurricanes and remove 3 to 5 times more carbon from the atmosphere per acre than land-based ecosystems.

These habitats protect our communities from the worst impact of hurricanes, and they serve as critical nursery grounds for species in commercial and recreational fisheries. Investing in coastal restoration projects would not only help protect coastal habitats, it would boost the economy and protect the lives of communities that depend on the preservation of those habitats."

