

# Senator Michelle Kidani

(D) Senate District 18– Serving Mililani Town, Waipio Gentry, Waikele, Village Park, Royal Kunia



Aloha, friends and neighbors:

In just a few short weeks, on Wednesday, January 16, the 2013 Legislative session will convene. The Senate has reaffirmed its leadership and committee structure, again selecting Maui Senator Shan Tsutsui to serve as President.

I am pleased to have been re-appointed Vice Chair of the Ways and Means Committee that will decide on budget priorities for the two years beginning July 1, 2013. My specific committee responsibility will again be to formulate the Senate's approach to the state's construction plans. We made substantial progress in kick-starting long-stalled repair and renovation projects at state facilities during this year, and we will continue to seek ways to improve infrastructure and employ the many private sector companies who work on all phases

of these jobs - from planning to design to hands-on construction.

Recent news about the state's economy indicates that conditions are beginning to stabilize. Tax revenues are up, thanks to record spending by visitors to the islands. The unemployment rate has dropped to 5.5 percent, although we know that not everyone who wants to work has found a job yet. The most recent statistics from the state's economists show:

- ◆ Construction jobs increased 1.4 percent during the third quarter of 2012 after 17 consecutive quarters of decline
- ◆ State construction spending increased 32.9 percent during the first nine months of the year
- ◆ Private building permit values increased 39.1 percent during the same time period

In addition, the administration announced last week that it had successfully sold more than \$850 million in general obligation bonds at near record low interest rates to continue funding projects that the Legislature has already approved.

While conditions are improving, our challenge as state policy makers is to assure that Hawaii's economy is built on a more diversified base so that we are not severely impacted by global events that are beyond our control. It is a balance for which we always strive and that should receive more attention this year as a recovering economy allows us to take a deep breath and refocus, rather than continuing to operate in crisis mode.

Me ke Aloha,

## Senator Kidani's 2013 Committee Assignments

**Committee on Ways and Means, Vice Chair** - overall state financing policies, including revenue enhancement, taxation, cash and debt management. I again have primary responsibility for the Senate's priorities for State construction projects.

**Committee on Education, Vice Chair** - early education, public schools and public libraries; and the **Committee on Higher Education** - covering the ten UH campuses, including the seven community colleges

**Committee on Hawaiian Affairs** - burial councils and Hawaiian affairs, including OHA, sovereignty and Hawaiian Home Lands

**Committee on Human Services** - public assistance; Medquest; youth services; early childhood education and care programs under the Department of Human Services; vocational rehab; long term care; well-being of Hawaii's youth, families; and homeless and public housing

## Traffic Safety Solution . . .

Here's a success story you need to know about. While in the district over the last few months, I witnessed a hazardous situation for pedestrians at the corner of Lumiaina and Kamehameha Hiway. Pedestrians crossing the highway had to dodge cars turning left out of Waikele because of the location of the crosswalk. I contacted the State Department of Transportation, and *I'm pleased to note that the crosswalk has been moved this week to the other side of the intersection.* Mahalo, DOT!





The spotlight turned on two more outstanding students from Waipahu High School earlier this month as the *Star Advertiser* reported on sophomores **Cara Phillips and Jessica Fernandez**. Both girls are leaders in student government at WHS, chosen for an overseas travel opportunity that took them to South Korea for an international student conference, the Jeju Youth Forum. ***Congratulations Cara & Jessica!***



Above and left, Jessica & Cara with new friends at the forum, and with WHS Advisor Joy Takara. At right, Cara and Jessica learn about a Harubang, a grandfather stone, protector of the island.

### Issues update . . .

Two issues captivated public attention over the summer. The Legislature has been monitoring progress toward resolution to assure accountability for the use of public funds.

**Public School Bus Transportation** - Sudden cuts and changes to school bus service, blamed on budget shortfalls, left students in some areas with no bus routes that families had come to count on. An audit of the school bus system raised serious questions about runaway costs, inadequate monitoring of expenses and routes, and a need for a change in procedures.

The Department of Education has completed its analysis of the crisis, and plans to present its report and several recommendations at a Board of Education meeting in early December.

**UH Concert Scam** - Some of the legal issues surrounding a scam that resulted in the loss of more than \$200,000 in UH funds are progressing through the law enforcement process.

But serious questions remain unanswered about UH procedures for handling funds, and the substantial expenditure of yet more money - more than \$1 million - on outside legal and public relations counsel in efforts to investigate and “explain” how all of this happened. A Special Senate Committee on Accountability has now issued its findings and recommendations that will be presented to the full Senate in January to consider actions that will help to prevent these kinds of incidents from occurring in the future.



**A successful session depends on public participation.** Here is some information about how you can make suggestions, attend public hearings either in person or by watching them on public access television, testify on specific bills and follow their progress through the session. Let us hear from you; our job is to assure that government is responsive to people’s needs.

**The Hawaii State Legislature’s Web site** has won national recognition for its design and the comprehensive range of information it offers to the public. You can track bills, access the latest drafts, follow committee hearings, find out how to submit testimony on bills either in person or online, and view current announcements about the session. On the Web at <http://capitol.hawaii.gov/>.

**The Legislature’s Public Access Room** is your office at the Capitol, where you’ll find computers for your use and knowledgeable staffers ready to help you prepare testimony, TV monitors to watch hearings in progress, resource materials to do research, printed handouts, including maps, and contact numbers for legislators and committees to help you find your way around the Capitol. Open to the public, all services free, in Room 401. Call them at 587-0478, or visit their Web site at <http://capitol.gov/lrb/par>.

### Check out these events happening in our neighborhoods in the next few weeks!

- **Saturday, December 1** - Waipahu Elementary School stages the first ever **Soaring Eagles craft fair** from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Waipahu High School.
- **Sunday, December 2** - **Waipahu Project Grad** conducts a benefit flea market from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Waipahu Longs. Information at 216-7449.
- **Wednesday, December 5** - **Waipahu Intermediate Winter Band and Chorus Concert**. Information at 675-0177.
- **Saturday, December 8** - **Waipio Gentry Christmas Parade**, beginning at Waipio Shopping Center, 10 a.m.
- **Saturday, December 8** - **Waipahu Community Christmas Parade**, Waipahu District Park to Waipahu Town Center, beginning at 2 p.m.
- **Saturday, December 15** - **Waipahu High School Band Holiday Concert**, 7 p.m. at WHS cafeteria. More information at 528-9555.
- **Wednesday, December 12** - **An Evening in Waipio Craft Fair**, 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m., Hawaii Okinawa Center

