

*Aloha e Friends,*

I hope you and your 'ohana are all doing well and looking forward to a wonderful Christmas and holiday season with your friends, family, and loved ones. If I can help you or your 'ohana in any way, please contact me at (808) 586-6830, or send me an email at [sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov). I also invite you to follow me on social media: [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [Twitter](#).

Best wishes to you and your 'ohana.

**COMMITTEE  
CHAIR**

**AGRICULTURE &  
ENVIRONMENT**

**MEMBER**

- ◆ Judiciary
- ◆ Government Operations

**DISTRICT 21**

Portion of  
Fernandez Village,  
a portion of Ewa,  
Kapolei, Makakilo,  
and Kalaeloa



## DISTRICT 21 COMMUNITY UPDATES

### Listen Story Community Meeting

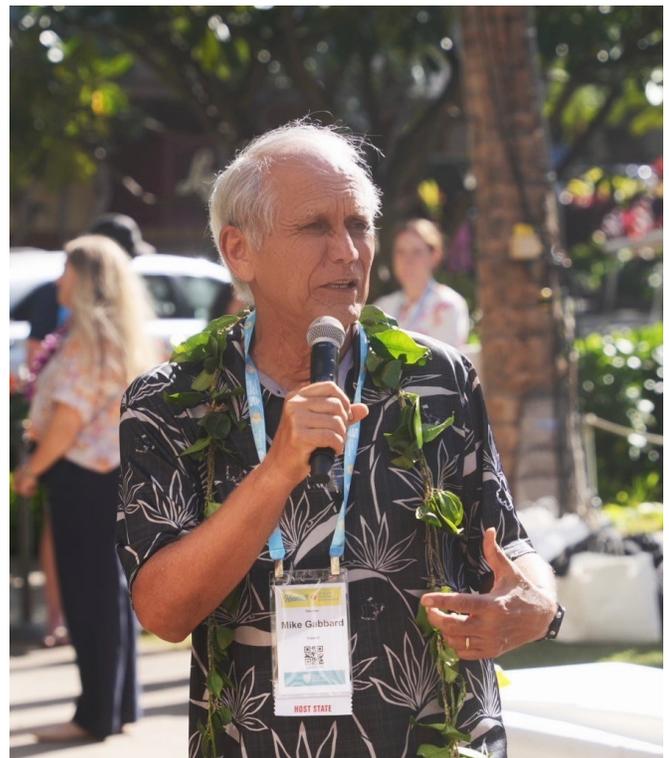
On Saturday, Jan 21, 9-10am I'll be hosting my first Listen Story meeting of 2023! The meeting is a hybrid, so people can attend either in-person at the Kapolei High School Teachers' Lounge, or via Zoom. Our Special Guest **Kiran Polk, Executive Director of the Kapolei Chamber of Commerce**, will be providing an overview of what initiatives the Kapolei Chamber is working on, and will share about the Business Revitalization Task Force and their priorities. There will be time for Q & A. Following Kiran's presentation, I'll give some quick community updates. Please send me an email at [sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov) to RSVP or for the link to join via Zoom.

### CSG Conference

I attended [The Council of State Governments \(CSG\)](#) conference from Dec 7-10 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village in Waikiki. It was the first time in 25 years that this National Conference has been in Hawai'i! State leaders from across the country and from all branches of government got to experience our legendary aloha hospitality. Founded in 1933, The Council of State Governments is the nation's largest nonpartisan organization serving all three branches of state elected and appointed officials. It was awesome meeting folks from all over the U.S. and being able to share our mana'o – ideas and thoughts – with each other!

Sessions at the conference included a wide variety of categories, such as Education & Workforce, Leadership Development, Health Care, Technology, Elections, and of course my favorite...Agriculture 😊

A very important session was in anticipation of the next Farm Bill in September 2023, where a panel of state agriculture officials and experts in the industry discussed what to expect (cont. on P3)



Senator Gabbard attended the Council of State Governments (CSG) Conference from Dec 7-11.

# DISTRICT 21 COMMUNITY UPDATES

## MA'O Organic Farms Site Visit

I had a wonderful visit on December 10, to [MA'O Organic Farms](#) on the westside of O'ahu, with a group of 11 folks who had traveled here from across the country to attend The Council of State Governments National Conference (CSG) 12/7-10.

Some of the conference attendees, in addition to being state legislators, were farmers as well. I thought it'd be fun to show them first-hand what an amazing operation we have here at MA'O. So, on the last day of the conference, my staff and I, along with 11 visitors from Idaho, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Wisconsin, even Saipan (largest island in the Northern Mariana Islands - about 120 mi north of Guam), piled into a mini-van for the hour-long ride from Waikiki to Wai'anae...

MA'O was born and founded by Gary and Kukui Mau-nakea-Forth in 2001. I first got wind of this amazing duo when I was on the City Council between 2003-2005. I was impressed with their vision, and even more impressed when I visited their farm. I spoke with some

of the interns (18-25 years of age) who arrive for work while it's still dark, and wearing headlamps, harvest the micro-greens destined for Four Seasons, FoodLand, Whole Foods, and other hotels and businesses. I heard and felt the passion in their voices and hearts about doing something positive for their families and for their community, to counter the bad rap the Wai'anae Coast sometime gets in the media and elsewhere.

The average age of our farmers in the state is 61. And we import about 90% of our food at a cost of around \$3 billion, every year, which is just stupid. In my humble opinion, what MA'O is doing just might hold the key to the future of agriculture in Hawai'i and on the mainland. It's my sincere hope and dream that we replicate MA'O Farms on each of the islands in Hawai'i nei. I'll continue to champion policies that can support making this a reality.

Meanwhile, many mahalos to MA'O Farms for teaching our youth the value of aloha, respect, aloha 'āina (love for the land) and the willingness to work hard. Mahalo for connecting two of our most precious assets--our 'āina, that which feeds, and our 'opio, our youth. You're not just growing food, you're growing young leaders. Your efforts are empowering our community to move towards self-sufficiency.



Senator Gabbard at a MA'O Organic Farms tour on Dec. 10. (Pictured L-R: Rep. Denita Yangetmai; Rep. Sonya Harper and daughter, Sophia; Meg Turner, Office Mgr; Sen. Gabbard; Sen. Bill and Margaret Hansell; Rep. Laurie and Bill Lickley; Sen. Roger Victory; Gary Maunakea-Forth; Rep. Jodi (and Julian – not pictured) Emerson; Senator Gary and Amy Cammack; Paula Hicks Hudson.)



On December 5th, Senator Gabbard attended the inauguration and swearing-in of the ninth Governor of the State of Hawai'i, Josh Green, M.D.

## New Governor

On December 5th, I had the pleasure of attending the inauguration and swearing-in of our ninth Governor of the State of Hawai'i, Josh Green, M.D. Governor Green was sworn in at the Neal S. Blaisdell Arena, in front of a lively crowd of about a thousand people. The ceremony was also live-streamed on Facebook. Sylvia Luke was also sworn in as Lt. Governor for the State of Hawai'i, making history as the first person of Korean ancestry elected to statewide office. AlohaCongrats, Gov! Looking forward to continuing working with you in your new role. If you get bored, come back to the Senate!

# DISTRICT 21 COMMUNITY UPDATES

## CSG Conference

(cont. from P2 ) and highlighted key issues that various states have recently faced. The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 – commonly known as the Farm Bill – reauthorizes through Fiscal Year 2023, and modifies Department of Agriculture programs that address a huge range of issues. Some of these include: trade and international food aid, rural development, farm credit, forestry, energy, and agriculture and food defense. It was great being able to discuss such an important topic in person at the conference.



**My Community Liaison Jhanavi Pomerantz with Governor Josh Green at UH West O'ahu's Nov 18 Grand Opening of the Academy of Creative Media.**

## Princess Abigail Kinoiki Kekaulike Kawānanakoa

Princess Abigail Kinohiki Kekaulike Kawānanakoa passed peacefully at her Nu'uaniu residence on Sunday evening, Dec. 11, 2022, at the age of 96. Her passing was announced the morning of Dec.12, by the Kawānanakoa Family, the Hale O Nā Ali'i O Hawai'i royal Hawaiian society, and 'Iolani Palace.

Princess Abigail Kinoiki Kekaulike Kawānanakoa was born on April 23, 1926, as the daughter of Lydia Liliuokalani Kawānanakoa and William Jeremiah Ellerbrock. Her mother was the daughter of Prince David Kawānanakoa and Princess Abigail Campbell Kawānanakoa.

Princess Abigail was the largest shareholder of the Campbell company, formerly known as the Campbell Estate. She was an avid supporter and funder of the beloved Merrie Monarch Festival. (cont. P4.)

## UH West O'ahu Academy of Creative Media Grand Opening

The Academy of Creative Media at UH West O'ahu had its grand opening on Friday, Nov 18, with over 300 guests! Although the facility was completed in 2020 with students taking classes in 2021, COVID delayed the much-anticipated grand opening. The \$37 million-dollar state-of-the-art facility offers courses such as Mobile App Development, Game Development & Design, Social Media courses, Video Production, and so much more. Features of the academy include a mill shop for constructing projects that students dream up, a 100-seater Dolby Atmos screening room, and a gaming/ e-sports room with 24 gaming stations!

The grand opening of this amazing facility goes hand-in-hand with UH West O'ahu's fastest-growing degree program – the Bachelor of Arts in Creative Media. The Student Production Center is designed to encourage and support Hawai'i's creative sector, which includes the state's ever-growing film and television production industry. This creative sector includes the film, music, digital media, and arts industries, and accounts for nearly 54,000 jobs across the state.

You can read more about the degrees offered at UH West O'ahu here: [Creative Media - University of Hawai'i-West O'ahu \(hawaii.edu\)](https://www.hawaii.edu/creative-media) This academy almost makes me want to go back to school 😊



**Sen. Gabbard and Rep. Sonya Harper from Illinois at the MA'O Organic Farms tour on Dec 10.**

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

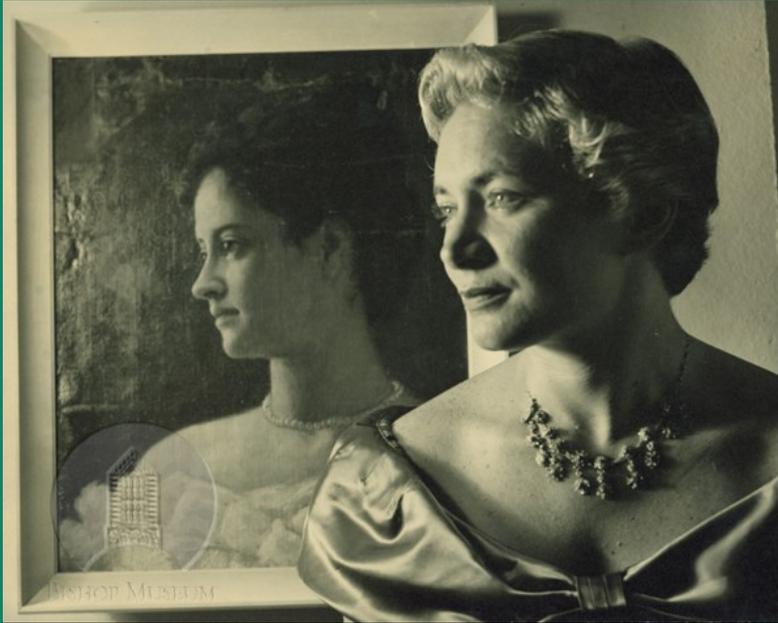


Photo by Joe Pacheco, Bishop Museum, of Princess Abigail Kinoiki Kekaulike Kawānanakoa.

## Have any Bill Ideas?

Hard to believe our 2023 Legislation session is just around the corner! (Opening Day is January 18!) My staff and I are hard at work compiling the bills for introduction. Please take a few minutes, if you're so inclined, to get involved in the process by sending me an idea for legislation. It doesn't have to be a fully fleshed out idea... a few bullets will do. State the problem which is top of mind for you, propose a possible solution, and whether or not you think it will take funding to implement. Would love to get your input on what we can do here at State Government to improve our beloved Hawai'i nei!

## Princess Abigail Kinoiki Kekaulike Kawānanakoa

(cont. P3) The princess saved 'Iolani palace from destruction and maintained it with her personal funds, as well as being instrumental in donating the land that UH West O'ahu stands on. We remember the princess and her countless humanitarian projects in the spirit of aloha.



## Red Hill: What's Happening Now?

Things aren't looking good for the Navy's credibility and their efforts to clean up the tanks at their Red Hill facility. Frankly, it's looking worse, especially for the folks that depend on those aquifers for their water. Probably most of you have heard of the PFAS leak by now... If I asked you this time last year, probably not. But we should have. In addition to the disastrous fuel leaks, we learned recently of yet another toxic leak at the Navy's Red Hill underground fuel facility.

On Nov. 29, approximately 1,100 gallons of toxic fire-suppressing foam leaked at the Red Hill fuel facility. The firefighting foam contains toxic chemicals known as Polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) - also known as "[forever chemicals](#)" because they won't easily break down in the environment. [PFAS](#) chemicals are also linked to cancer and other health problems. While the military says the cleanup of contaminated soil in the immediate spill site has been completed, PFAS has been known by the Navy to be leaking into our soil for over a year now. Why are we just now learning about this?

Unfortunately, Red Hill's firefighting system has been dysfunctional for years, according to military records. Fortunately, according to the health department, the spill is not expected to have an impact on the water supply located 100 feet below the Red Hill tanks.

