
SENATE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT TO CONVENE A SEARCH AND RESCUE WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO DETER HIKERS FROM ENTERING ILLEGAL HIKING TRAILS AND TO ADDRESS RISING SEARCH AND RESCUE COSTS FACING THE STATE AND COUNTIES DUE TO INCREASED ILLEGAL HIKING TRAFFIC.

1 WHEREAS, hiking is a popular outdoor activity to enjoy the
2 State's unique natural environment, including endemic flora,
3 majestic waterfalls, and panoramic views of the ocean; and
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5 WHEREAS, the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic has
6 increased outdoor activity around the world, specifically hiking
7 in Hawaii; and
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9 WHEREAS, certain areas within the numerous hiking trails
10 available to the public throughout the State pose safety
11 concerns and consequently have been closed to the public; and
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13 WHEREAS, despite warnings, some individuals and groups
14 unlawfully enter trails that have been closed to the public due
15 to safety concerns, ultimately putting themselves at risk of
16 significant injury and risking damage to native habitats and
17 other natural resources that may be in those closed areas for
18 preservation purposes; and
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20 WHEREAS, an increase in hiking in the State requires more
21 emergency responders to be readily available in case hikers are
22 in need of search and rescue; and
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24 WHEREAS, the more searches and rescues made, the more risks
25 there are to emergency responders; and
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27 WHEREAS, the State and counties of Hawaii incur significant
28 costs associated with the rescue of hikers who choose to go on
29 illegal hikes and often ignore signs prohibiting access; and



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2 WHEREAS, each rescue costs upwards of thousands of dollars,
3 and nearly one thousand rescues are made every year in Hawaii;
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6 WHEREAS, six states - Idaho, Maine, New Hampshire, Oregon,
7 South Dakota, and Vermont - have existing laws in place that
8 impose a financial penalty for individuals needing to be rescued
9 outdoors because of their lack of preparation; and

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11 WHEREAS, because of the considerable costs associated with
12 the search and rescue of individuals who wilfully disregard
13 their and others' safety by ignoring warning signs, it is
14 critical to develop policies that encourage public safety and
15 accountability; now, therefore,

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17 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-second
18 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2024,
19 that the Department of Law Enforcement is requested to convene a
20 Search and Rescue Working Group to develop and make
21 recommendations to deter hikers from entering illegal hiking
22 trails and to address rising search and rescue costs facing the
23 State and counties due to increased illegal hiking traffic; and

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25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Search and Rescue Working
26 Group is also requested to examine:

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28 (1) Existing applicable fines or fees and propose, if
29 appropriate, new or amended fines or fees;
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31 (2) The process for collecting fines or fees; and
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33 (3) The policies of other states with regard to fees
34 imposed on persons rescued from illegal hikes; and
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36 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Search and Rescue Working
37 Group is requested to consist of the following members, or their
38 designees:

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40 (1) The Director of Law Enforcement;
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42 (2) The Attorney General;



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- 2 (3) A member of the Judiciary, appointed by the Chief
- 3 Justice of the Hawaii Supreme Court;
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- 5 (4) The chief of police from each county;
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- 7 (5) The fire chief from each county; and
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- 9 (6) The prosecuting attorney from each county; and

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11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Search and Rescue Working
12 Group is requested to submit a report of its findings and
13 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the
14 Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
15 the Regular Session of 2025; and

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17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
18 Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Law Enforcement,
19 Attorney General, Chief Justice, chief of police of each county,
20 fire chief of each county, and prosecuting attorney of each
21 county.

