

# Hawaii Reporter

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### **After Tragic Boating Accident, Hawaii Kai Community Pledges to Increase Safety in Maunalua Bay**

By Michele Van Hessen, 11/4/2009 3:29:08 PM

HONOLULU, HAWAII - Representative Gene Ward (R-Hawaii Kai-Kalama Valley) today thanked the nearly 100 attendees of last night's Town Hall on Safety in Maunalua Bay for voicing their concerns about water safety and their commitment to preventing future tragedies from occurring in the bay.

Rep. Ward said, "After Keahi Lum's tragic accident, we called on the community to come out and learn how we can step up safety in the bay. Last night, Hawaii Kai showed up in force with a sense of volunteerism that, once again, made me proud to be the representative of District 17."

At the meeting, DLNR's Director Laura Thielen, Boating Division Administrator Ed Underwood, Capt. Barry Compagnoni of the U.S. Coast Guard, and other officials presented a brief overview of safety regulations in Maunalua Bay then spent the night listening to testimony and concerns from community members who one by one reiterated the need for increased enforcement on the water.

Various ideas for legislation that would increase funds for enforcement and tighten rules governing bay user-conflicts were suggested, but DLNR and the Coast Guard stated that the most immediate course of action to improve safety in the bay would be to join volunteer enforcement organizations such as DLNR's Makai Watch or the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Both organizations train their volunteers to police the bay so violators can be more easily caught and prosecuted. The Makai Watch is modeled after the successful Neighborhood Watch program. (Community members wishing to join either group should call Beth Fukumoto at 586-6420.)

About a dozen members of the audience raised their hands to become an active member of the Makai Watch, including Lehua Lum, the mother of the October 4 boating accident victim, Keahi Lum. Mrs. Lum and other friends and family members volunteered to become Makai Watch participants and advisors.

"When Mrs. Lum spoke last night, the community listened, and I know the Makai Watch program will be a success with her on board," Rep. Ward concluded.

*Michele Van Hessen is a spokesperson for the Hawaii House Republicans*

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