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Hawaii Shark Task Force Formed for Enforcement and Legislation

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Rep. Gene Ward (R-Hawaii Kai-Kalama Valley) today announced formation of a 'Shark Task Force.' "The purpose of the task force is to engage the community in the two important issues of enforcement and legislation," Ward said.

"State law forbids the practice of chumming or the feeding of sharks from the shoreline to 3 miles offshore, and federal law prohibits the practice beyond 3 miles up to 200 miles, but there is really no enforcement of these laws," Ward added.

Ward's legislative office is now drafting legislation to vet with Hawaii Kai/East Honolulu community that will create a ban on the commercial practice of shark feeding tours but will exempt educational and scientific research while at the same time allowing for traditional Hawaii cultural practices.

Formation of the task force follows a town hall meeting co-sponsored by Ward's office last April that attracted over 400 angry members of the Hawaii Kai community, as well as a legislative information briefing that was later held at the Hawaii State Legislature in May of 2009.

"Legislation will be discussed in future town hall meetings in Hawaii Kai starting around the middle of July, and we hope all members of the community will weigh in, including the shark tour operators." Ward concluded.

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