

# Hawaii Reporter

## Freedom to Report Real News

---

### **Quick Hits Inside the Capitol - March 4, 2008**

*Limited, Yet Strong Debate In House of Representatives As Bills Cross To Senate*

By Hawaii Reporter, 3/4/2008 8:06:29 PM

*This is a report on the crossover of bills from the House to the Senate on Tuesday, March 4. For the Senate report, see ["Senate Passes Bills to Ban Lightbulbs, Support Land Grab at Turtle Bay"](#)*

Today, the House of Representatives held a day-long session in which surviving bills crossed to the Senate. The day began with a prayer by Rep. Alex Sonson in which he invoked divine intervention in blessing "the sick, weary, and those who do not yet realize they are not yet invincible" and asked for "penetrating vision" amidst "emotional tension in these chambers." Rep. Sonson, who mentioned that he himself had been ill over the following days, expressed that he had been greatly humbled.

Immediately following the Waipahu legislator's benediction for grace, the House swiftly launched into a debate over several key bills:

#### **HB 464 HD2, Relating To Health**

Rep. Marilyn Lee and the Women's Caucus introduced a measure to ensure that recipients of state funding provide "medically accurate, factual information that is age-appropriate and includes education on both abstinence and contraception." This brought about harsh debate on the Floor from both parties, with accusations and innuendo that the measure was structured at "dealing a blow" to religious abstinence education.

"You can look at data many ways," said Rep. Kymberly Pine, "Why are we discriminating against abstinence only education?"

Rep. Gene Ward used the example of Uganda, a nation struggling with AIDS, and described how not only usage of contraception, but abstinence helped reduce the number of infected persons.

The bill passed to the Senate with only Republican Reps. Lynn Finnegan, Colleen Meyer and Pine voting no.

#### **HB 2450 HD1, Relating To Land Use**

Rep. Cliff Tsuji's bill requiring an agricultural buffer "prohibiting nonagricultural development within an unspecified distance from the property line bordering any agricultural parcel used for farming operations" raised debate over whether or not "everyone has thought this through – from an Oahu perspective." The bill passed with Republican Reps. Barbara Marumoto and Colleen Meyer voting no.

#### **HB 2224 HD1, Relating To Insurance**

House Bill 2224 HD1, introduced by Speaker of the House Calvin Say, was the flashpoint for angry words over veiled meanings and hidden innuendos between the Health Chair, Josh Green, and Minority Leader Lynn Finnegan.

The measure, which requires that insurers offer health care coverage to the regular employees of any group or association to offer the same coverage to part-time employees working at least 15 hours per week, passed with none voting no.

### **HB 2502 HD2, Relating To Solar Energy**

Rep. Hermina Morita's bill to allow solar energy facilities on agricultural lands initiated an emotional exchange words with Majority Leader Kirk Caldwell asserting "Mr. Speaker, the sun is out there. Let's use it."

Morita, the original introducer, admitted, "It could be a good bill, but right now it's not."

Rep. Ward spoke about how everyone criticized the bill as being a free for all, and he noted, "Let's have a free for all! We've been trying to get solar for three decades. Let's get a free for all." The bill passed with Reps. Lyla Berg, Sylvia Luke, Scott Saiki, and Glenn Wakai voting no.

### **HB 2521 HD2, Relating To Education**

Rep. Jerry Chang's bill requiring one percent of all general revenues accrued from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2014 to be deposited into a University of Hawaii Repair and Maintenance Special Account for facility repairs as well as an appropriation of \$50,000,000 from the special account in FY2008-2009 to the funding of repairs and maintenance drew a comment from Rep. Ward in which he said this bill was "like drinking out of a fire hose ... I don't think they're ready." The bill passed with Democrat Reps. Lyla Berg, Hermina Morita, and Roy Takumi voting no.

### **HB 2527 HD1, Relating To Smart Growth**

Rep. Joe Bertram's bill to create greenways – "a linear open space established along either a natural corridor, such as a riverfront, stream valley, or ridgeline, or a canal, scenic road, or other route; any natural or landscaped course for pedestrian or bicycle passage; an open space connector linking parks, nature reserves, cultural features, or historic sites with each other and populated areas; or a local strip or linear park designated as a parkway or greenbelt" – brought concerns from several representatives. Rep. Colleen Meyer said, "I'm worried about Smart Growth, Mr. Speaker" and talked about the danger of legislating over "the soundbyte of the day".

The bill passed with only Rep. Meyer voting no – but during the time of the vote, Democrat Reps. Karen Awana, Rida Cabanilla, Bob Nakasone, Joe Souki, and K. Mark Takai were not present.

### **HB 2259 HD2, Relating To Aerospace Development**

Rep. Cliff Tsuji's bill to acquire a commercial spaceport for Hawaii brought strong comments in support from Rep. Gene Ward, who talked about how the draw of space exploration and space tourism would greatly benefit Hawaii. The bill passed with none voting no.

### **HB 2301 HD1, Relating To Dentistry**

Majority Leader Kirk Caldwell's bill to prohibit "interference in the practice of dentistry by an unlicensed person or entity" and prohibit "the practice of dentistry in a commercial or mercantile establishment" was characterized on the Floor by Rep. Gene Ward as "the anti-Wal Mart, anti-Big Box bill" who went on to say that it was a premature, misplaced constraint of trade. The bill passed, with Rep. Ward as the only no vote.

### **HB 2664, Relating To Disaster Relief**

Speaker Calvin Say's introduction to clarify that "the governor shall not utilize the power to suspend laws authorized under the Civil Defense and Emergency Act when the State is attacked for purposes of non-civil defense situations unless there is a tangible and measurable threat to the people or environment of the State" drew harsh debate on the Floor, including debate between Reps. Cabanilla and Pine over "the four types of homeless people." The bill passed with ten representatives voting no – Reps. Joe Bertram, Corrine Ching, Lynn Finnegan, Josh Green, Barbara Marumoto, Angus McKelvey, Colleen Meyer, Kym Pine, Cynthia Thielen and Gene Ward.

## **HB 2557 HD1, Relating To Evidence**

Majority Floor Leader Blake Oshiro's journalism shield law bill passed the House without any dissenting votes, with Rep. Gene Ward offering the comments that "this is a very good bill that could be polished more" and which could potentially become "a fine piece for all of us."

Reach Hawaii Reporter at <mailto:tips@hawaiireporter.com>

*HawaiiReporter.com reports the real news, and prints all editorials submitted, even if they do not represent the viewpoint of the editors, as long as they are written clearly. Send editorials to <mailto:Malia@HawaiiReporter.com>*

[Hawaii State Capitol News...](#)

© 2010 Hawaii Reporter, Inc.