

# Hawaii Reporter

## Freedom to Report Real News

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### **Quick Hits at the Capitol - Feb. 8, 2008**

*Board of Education Chair Donna Ikeda Out of Control, Minority Faction Says; Small Business Caucus Supports Small Business Bill of Rights; Saving Ka Iwi Coast Doesn't Have to Cost Taxpayers a Bundle*  
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### **Board of Education Chair Donna Ikeda Out of Control, Minority Faction Says**

State Board of Education Member Lei Ahu Isa held a press conference at the Capitol yesterday to make it clear that there is a minority faction within the board that does not agree with the actions of the current BOE Chair Donna Ikeda.

"I want to be very explicit about why we are doing this. It is not to enter into a petty debate about power. By not speaking out, it gives the impression that we are giving silent approval and endorsing actions that we do not agree with," said Ahu Isa.

Specifically, Ahu Isa takes issue with the Jan. 24, 2008, vote on whether or not to fund teacher drug testing that was approved by the teachers in their collective bargaining agreement as a condition for increased pay. Ahu Isa said that only 7 of the 14 board members were present for the vote.

Gov. Linda Lingle responded to the board's action by stating that their failure to fund drug testing would jeopardize teacher pay.

"The BOE and the DOE signed the HSTA contract in good faith, and we are bound to fulfill the terms of the contract," said Ahu Isa. "The DOE human resources division is already working with HSTA to develop the drug testing program, so why are we debating the funding at this point and jeopardizing the pay raises?"

If a contractual obligation was agreed to, then what would be the justification for breaching it by not funding it when the Department of Education says that they currently have the funds and are doing the work? Could it be that there are parties who want to breach the contract so it can be renegotiated with terms that better suit their needs? BOE member Mary Cochran also objects to some of Ikeda's recent actions, such as the firing of BOE ombudsman, Beth McKeen, and spokesman and communications director Greg Knudsen. Both were fired last month and no reason was made available to the public. "We are speaking up for all workers being crushed and harassed," said Cochran in a written statement. McKeen was very close to retirement when she was fired.

The ombudsman position was created to act as the "citizen's representative" to investigate complaints and mediate a fair settlement between education consumers and the Department of Education.

Today, the Senate Education Committee will hear SB2664, which will create 7 ombudsman positions with

the Department of Education, something Ahu Isa is adamantly opposed to. "That will create more bureaucracy and will be like the fox guarding the henhouse," said Ahu Isa.

Ikeda was elected by a majority of the state's 13 Board of Education's members in December 2007 to a 1-year term. Ikeda previously served 22 years in the state Legislature and was once considered the state's most powerful Senator as head of the Ways and Means Committee. She lost her re-election bid to the Senate in 1996 to Sen. Sam Slom, R-Hawaii Kai, despite tremendous support from the Bishop Estate and other powerful players in Hawaii politics. A poll at the time showed she became increasingly unpopular with the voters.

- *Laura Brown*

### **Small Business Caucus Supports Small Business Bill of Rights**

The House Small Business Caucus announced its support today for House Bill 2736, which creates a "Small Business Bill of Rights." The Small Business Caucus is a bi-partisan group of legislators that have joined together to help Hawaii attract and retain small businesses and entrepreneurs.

We were very pleased with this legislation, because this bill will reduce the regulatory roadblocks that often hamper Hawaii's small business owners and will have a positive impact on the local economy. HB 2736 was passed unanimously by the House Committee on Economic Development and Business Concerns and awaits a joint hearing by the committees on Consumer Protection and Commerce and the Judiciary. If the bill is enacted, it will set forth seventeen "rights" for small businesses, which will ensure them equal and fair treatment from state and county regulators.

Our local entrepreneurs are often deterred by the state's "fine and punishment" approach to regulation, and a bill of rights will help reduce the regulatory burdens in our state.

- *Reps. Gene Ward and Jon Riki Karamatsu (Small Business Caucus Co-Chairs)*

### **Saving Ka Iwi Coast Doesn't Have to Cost Taxpayers a Bundle**

There is a push to use state taxpayer funds to purchase "preservation" land on the Ka Iwi Coast line fronting Sandy Beach.

SB2248 (relating to Ka Iwi) "makes an appropriation for the board of land and natural resources to enter into negotiations and to acquire land along the Ka Iwi coast which is in imminent danger of being developed. The acquired land is to be held as resource value lands, also known as legacy lands. The funds necessary for this acquisition shall come from the land conservation fund.

See the full bill here:

[http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2008/Bills/SB2248\\_.pdf](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2008/Bills/SB2248_.pdf)

Testimony on the bill will be heard Saturday, Feb. 9, 2008, at 11 a.m. in Conference Room 229.

The environmental group, Hawaii Kai Hui, says this is an "amazing opportunity" because it will "protect and perpetuate the aina and its cultural resources for the benefit of future generations; Ka Iwi is the last open and accessible coastline except for Kaena Point; East Oahu has lost more green open spaces to development than any other part of the island; the 7 mile Ka Iwi coast drive supports the visitor experience to the East end of Oahu; preserving will enable all our residents, tourists and future generations to enjoy this pristine area; the Ka Iwi area is an irreplaceable natural, scenic resource for the state of Hawaii; the Ka Iwi scenic shoreline has rich cultural significance, some documented and some yet to be discovered."

There is no doubt that the Ka Iwi Coast line should be preserved. It was decided years ago that the land

should remain undeveloped and it was thereby designated "preservation" by the government.

The real question is why is this even up for discussion? The Ka Iwi coast line is considered "preservation" land and preservation should mean preservation, not some open space with a lot of fancy hotel rooms that are being called "cabins" by sneaky developers to try to bypass legal requirements.

Rather than using taxpayer money to buy the land at a premium, the state Legislature should amend the law so that "preservation" truly protects property from being developed when it is not supposed to be. That would protect Ka Iwi and other precious preservation land around the state.

- *Malia Zimmerman*

Send comments about legislation and happenings at the Capitol to <mailto:tips@hawaiireporter.com>

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