



Souki kicks Ward out of House session

By Star-Bulletin staff



Minority leader Gene Ward was ejected from the House floor yesterday after he refused to stop criticizing a legislative broadcast policy which he characterized as a propaganda tool for the Democratic majority.

As voices flared into shouting, Speaker Joe Souki (D, Kapalua-Wailuku) declared Ward out of order, turned off his microphone, and ordered the Republican escorted from the House chambers.

Souki said it was the first time he has taken such action in his five-year tenure as speaker.

Said Ward, who was permitted to return after spending several minutes in an adjoining room: "I felt like I was under house arrest."

The incident was sparked when the House was considering a bill that would make cable broadcasts of legislative proceedings a permanent, rather than pilot, program.

Ward rose to oppose it, saying, "It should better be named the propaganda bill, Mr. Speaker, because it just ain't true."

The focus of his attack was post-session wrap-ups presented by lawmakers the past two years.

While the broadcast project is funded by taxpayer money and underwritten by cable subscriber fees, programming essentially is controlled by the Democratic leadership.

Ward (R, Mariner's Ridge-Aina Haina) called the practice unfair and said the GOP should be given at least a half-hour of air time.

When he returned to the propaganda theme, Souki warned Ward to stick to the merits of the bill and said he was out of order.

"I challenge the chair that I'm out of order, that the people who pay ..." Ward started, before Souki banged his gavel and called for a brief recess.

The minority leader was allowed to continue speaking when the session reconvened. Ward continued



asking for a half-hour so Republicans would have some equal standing.

"You want to know what back-of-the-bus is?" he asked, his voice rising. "You want to know what exclusion is?"

Souki, his voice rising in turn, repeated his warnings.

Ward again began talking and Souki again called him out of order.

They started talking at the same time before Ward's microphone was shut off.

The bill passed with seven of the 12 Republicans voting against it. Ward and Souki shook hands after the session.

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