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HB 444

Hawai'i recognizes equal rights for all

I'm cautiously optimistic at the passing of HB 444. Is it possible, really, that lawmakers are finally recognizing equal civil rights for all citizens of the United States?

Opponents paint this as a "horrible thing," but it really comes down to people in relationships who make long-term commitments to one another as a matter of personal decision, with or without religious beliefs attached.

My boyfriend and I make seven years together next week. We plan to spend the rest of our lives together. Should we somehow not have the same basic rights as married people? Our choice not to marry is no one else's business.

I applaud the lawmakers who voted on behalf of HB 444. This bill just makes sense and it's a long time coming.

*Lora Williams
Kane'ohe*

Bill does not affect marriage in any way

As a Christian, I am appalled by the number of churches fighting so hard against House Bill 444. I think too many churches are caught up in their "religion" and forgotten that Christianity is supposed to be a relationship.

We are supposed to pattern ourselves after Christ. Not once in the 33 years that Jesus walked on this Earth did he ever discriminate against a people. It's disgusting that anyone would do so in His name.

I agree that the institution of marriage is sacred. I understand that many people believe that it is

the cornerstone on which our society is built.

But no one is trying to change your marriage. HB 444 would allow all citizens in committed relationships to have the same rights, duties and privileges as the Hawai'i law governing marriage without infringing on the sanctity of marriage. Traditionalists should welcome this bill's passage.

I applaud the 31 members of the House who were brave enough to do the right thing. God bless you.

*Simon Taylor
Honolulu*

rail tax

Why not use funds to help state budget?

Thank you for printing Rep. Gene Ward's commentary, "Tax raise not needed to balance budget" (April 23).

I especially appreciate his closing statement, "No one should tell the people of Hawaii that we don't have any other choice but to raise taxes." He provides some good choices, such as "borrowing from — not raiding — the Hurricane

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Mom Dilemma #36:
Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

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NO, I have some rules!

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Relief Fund and the rainy day fund."

There is another choice no one is considering — borrowing from the fixed rail fund. Millions of dollars are sitting in a fund which could be used to help the city and state in this time of financial hardship. It seems to me like someone saving up for a Hummer while going without the basic necessities of life.

*Gloria Kaneshiro
Honolulu*

airlines

Wales-to-Hawaii trip worth the strain

I refer to an editorial about flying to Hawaii from the Mainland being a hassle ("Flying to Hawai'i one more reason visitors stay home," April 28).

I fly every year from Wales in the United Kingdom, and while I suffer with jet lag, swollen ankles, etc., I gladly suffer to enjoy the island peace and friendliness shown to us by everyone.

They say there is no place like home — well, I wish this was my home. In fact, it is my "home away from home" for two or three weeks every year. This visitor will always return.

*Sue Horton
Waikiki*

federal spending

Money for defense outweighs them all

A recent article in your paper talked of the skyrocketing costs of health care for our veterans, somewhere about \$60 billion and escalating. This figure, however, pales in comparison in the total amount we pay for defense, warfare, and defense-related spending. Some estimates put this figure over \$1 trillion

dollars per year.

During the health care debate, some in Congress were putting up the red flag warning us the true cost of this plan would be \$90 billion per year.

Of course the Congressional Budget Office said the entire plan would actually save this country money. But say the \$90 billion figure is accurate; t his is still less than a 10th of what we pay for our defense and the wars we continue to pursue.

Do we really need to spend more on our defense and security than almost the rest of the world combined? We were once the shining city on a hill, with other countries aspiring to be like us. Now we are in everyone else's backyard, attempting to transform the world into our image by all means necessary. Money is no object.

*Roman Leverenz
Honolulu*

elections

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R. Tanaka
Honolulu

DHSPLAN

Modern program won't reach needy

DHS Director Koller wrote regarding Senate Bill 2650 and stated that legislators have put "interests of union workers above the needs of the vulnerable residents" of the Neighbor Island counties.

I believe the Legislature did the opposite. As a former eligibility worker, the neediest clients I serviced were the severely mentally ill, the homeless and the elderly with limited English skills.

I don't see how using the proposed modern processing methods would assist the most vulnerable clients efficiently, for many don't have access to telephone, faxes or the Internet.

Koller implies that the legislators are protecting unionized workers, but where is the efficiency in creating a new system that will cost taxpayer money and laying off trained workers when applications for assistance are rising because of our current economy?

Terri Nakamura
Honolulu

HC&S

Maui tourism needs green, open vistas

If HC&S loses its water ("Maui Biofuels could solve water issue," April 15), we all lose.

From a visitor industry perspective, if our verdant cane fields were to run fallow, it would change

the entire appearance and appeal of our island forever. Maui's strength as a top destination depends upon our ability to showcase our island as a lovely, green paradise with open vistas and sweeping views. HC&S requires water to keep it that way. It is our island's beauty that attracts visitors and ultimately drives our economy.

Water is needed for sugar. Water for jobs. Water for the working, living laboratory that is part of our biofuels future. Community organizations such as Maui Economic Opportunity need the support of healthy visitor and agriculture industries to support our neighbors in need.

We hope the state Commission on Water Resource Management rules favorably for HC&S. Agriculture, tourism and not-for-profit organizations are all in this together.

Carol Reimann
Executive director, Maui Hotel & Lodging Association

Sandy Baz
Chief executive officer, Maui Economic Opportunity Inc.

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