



HAWAII'S VOICE FOR A BETTER FUTURE

**Please join us for lunch
MONDAY, April 23, 2007**

11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Miyama Main Hall, Harris United Methodist Church
Nuuanu Ave. and South Vineyard Blvd.
Ample parking - driveway off Nuuanu Ave.

AGENDA:

11:30 LUNCHEON: Garden Lasagna Alfredo, salad, Dessert by Eloise. \$5.00 donation

11:45 Welcome, Introductions and Remarks, *Larry Geller, President*

12:00 PROGRAM: "Divided We Fail" Bruce Bottorff, AARP State Director of Communication

This nation wide project is designed to engage the American people, elected officials and the business community to find broad-based, bi-partisan solutions to the most compelling issues facing the nation—health care and the long-term financial security of Americans. Have you experienced personal problems or have concerns about health care and financial security? AARP says collecting personal stories is going to be one of their most powerful and compelling ways to raise awareness and bring about positive social change.

12:45 ANNOUNCEMENTS

LUNCH SERVER: JOHN CANNELL

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: 10:00 A.M. PRECEEDING LUNCH

NOTICE NOTICE NOTICE NOTICE NOTICE NOTICE NOTICE

**CHANGE OF DATE for LUNCHEON MEETING FOR MAY
WILL BE MONDAY MAY 14**

**PROGRAM: HAWAII STATE REPRESENTATIVE JOSH GREEN, Successes and Disappointments on
Health and Care giving Bills – 2007. Preparing for 2008: Concerns, Studies, Commissions.**

CHANGE A LIGHT, CHANGE THE WORLD

Changing just one light bulb in your house or office can save you approximately \$30 in utility costs and prevent the release of more than 450 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions. A \$5 investment in an energy efficient fluorescent bulb reaps both financial and environmental benefits. This is just an example of how we can all choose to make in our lives to be more energy savvy. Commercial buildings and businesses are also beginning to take up the challenge. In Hawaii, there are only 14 buildings that have earned an ENERGY STAR rating, but the total energy savings is so great that Hawaii ranks fifth in the nation in energy saved.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER – LARRY GELLER

The safety of pedestrians remains a hot issue due to a sudden spurt of deaths earlier this year. The state Department of Transportation had done nothing at all to improve pedestrian safety despite an August 2006 report by AARP on its extensive survey of dangerous intersections. As we near the end of the legislative process, there are bills to require them to take action, if they pass into law.

Instead of studying the problem and taking action in 2010 (as the DOT proposed), the bills now call for immediate action and include a provision for enforcement of existing laws. Something needs to be done to shift the focus from changing pedestrian behavior to correcting the dangerous driving habits of Hawaii motorists that result in death and injury.

One section of HB357 will be unique in the country if it passes into law. This section recognizes that pedestrians are entitled to protection according to the Hawaii State Constitution:

Making Hawaii's roadways safer for pedestrians is consistent with Kamehameha's famous law, *Ke Kanawai Mamalahoe*, the law of the splintered paddle, which assures that every man, woman, and child is able to travel freely and in peace. This law is established as state law in article IX, section 10, of the Hawaii state constitution:

"Let every elderly person, woman and child lie by the roadside in safety -- shall be a unique and living symbol of the State's concern for public safety."

Will the Honolulu Police Department follow the King's edict and step up enforcement of laws by ticketing motorists?

NOTES FROM LAST MONTH'S MEETING – Ute Lange, The Homeless

Mr. Lange has seen a change toward more community compassion and willingness to help the homeless in the past ten years. The Next Step Shelter in Kakaako has 300 volunteers coming to help. These include churches of all denominations, restaurants, medical students, high school and college students, musical and dance groups. Of the current 300 residents, most are from Micronesia and have no skills. One-third are children of whom 50% are under 3 years of age. Before coming to the shelter, the children suffered from loss of sleep and lack of sufficient food that impacted on their schoolwork.

While the plan originally was to be transitional housing, to help break the cycle of poverty and homelessness, this has proved difficult since there is very little low-cost housing available. Some have been wait-listed for 8 years. Many are working, but by the time they buy food for their families, medicine or some clothing, there is not enough left for housing.

The Shelter's first priority is to provide a safe place to sleep and enough to eat. Overcoming bureaucratic hurdles has been a part of Lange's job. For example, the DOH required a licensed kitchen and menus a month in advance. There were no funds for licensing and since the food came primarily from the Food Bank, meals consisted of what happened to be available that day. Many resident's had no I.D.s because their belongings, including I.D.s, were constantly being stolen while on the beach or parks. No I.D.s - no way to get employment, bus passes, other services.

So an important service is to have resources at the shelter to connect people with what they need to become self-sufficient, skill training, legal aid, health exams and vaccinations.

Those wishing to help in any way may call 522-0397.

INSURANCE COMPANIES CAUGHT DENYING CARE TO THE MOST VULNERABLE SENIORS

Interviews by *The New York Times* and confidential depositions indicate that some long-term-care insurers have developed procedures that make it nearly impossible for policyholders to be paid. A review of more than 400 of the thousands of grievances and lawsuits filed in recent years against the major long-term-care insurers shows elderly policyholders are confronting unnecessary delays and overwhelming bureaucracies. Current and former employees at the companies Conseco, Bankers Life, and Penn Treaty have described business practices that denied or delayed policyholders' claims for seemingly trivial reasons. Employees said they had been prohibited from making phone calls to policyholders and that claims had been abandoned without informing policyholders. Policyholders contend that Conseco, Bankers Life, and Penn Treaty denied claims because they

failed to submit unimportant paperwork; because daily nursing notes did not detail minute procedures; because they filled out the wrong forms after receiving them from the insurance companies; and because facilities were deemed inappropriate even though they were licensed by state regulators. Many lawsuits filed against long-term-care insurers have been settled with the requirement that settlement terms be kept confidential.

STUDY EXAMINES REASONS BEHIND HIGH U.S. HEALTH CARE COSTS

A study on the U.S. health-care system released “without fanfare” earlier this year by McKinsey Global Institute, the independent research arm of the consulting firm, examined why the U.S. spends nearly double the average of other industrialized countries on health care - with no better, and in some cases inferior, medical outcomes. According to a *Washington Post* item about the study, even after adjusting for wealth, population mix and higher levels of some diseases, the U.S. spends \$477 billion a year more on health care than would be expected if it fit the spending pattern of 13 other advanced countries. That waste of money works out to 3.6 percent of the nation's entire economic output, or \$1,645 per person, every year. The *New York Times*' **Paul Krugman** noted that a major reason for the high spending is \$98 billion a year in excessive administrative costs. U.S. doctors' high

average incomes of \$274,000 for specialists and \$173,000 for general practitioners are the source of another \$58 billion of the difference each year. The high costs are not due to doctors' charges per procedure, but to how many patients they see and how many procedures they perform - a volume of business 60 percent higher here than elsewhere. The U.S. also spends \$57- \$66 billion a year more for drugs than other developed countries, mostly because drug companies are able to charge, on average, 60 to 70 percent more for brand-name prescription drugs. “The study estimates the cost of providing full medical care to all of America's uninsured at \$77 billion annually,” said **Edward Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “The money for universal care is there, but the pot needs to be spent more wisely.”

EDEN AT HOME

Many of you have heard about the Eden Alternative and the work they have done in transforming long-term care institutions. But, did you know that the Eden Alternative has designed a program for family and volunteer caregivers? The program is called “Eden at Home” and was designed to bring the Eden philosophy to the wider community involved in caring for elders—outside of institutions.

Please join AARP Hawaii and the Eden Alternative for a presentation on “Eden At Home,” by Laura Beck, Program Director of Eden at Home (EAH).

When: Tuesday, April 24, 2007 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Where: AARP Hawaii State Office, 1132 Bishop Street, Suite 1920

Who: Collaborative partners, volunteer, and family caregivers.

Please RSVP by emailing jboland@aarp.org or calling 545-6003.

Jackie McCarter Boland, Associate State Director for Outreach and Service
AARP Hawaii, 1132 Bishop Street, Suite 1920

DRUG COMPANIES SPENT \$155 MILLION ON LOBBYING OVER EIGHTEEN MONTHS

From January 2005 through June 2006, drug companies and their trade groups spent \$155 million lobbying on issues ranging from protecting drug patents to keeping lower-priced Canadian drugs from being imported to the U.S., a Center for Public Integrity study of disclosure records shows. The inclusion of manufacturers of medical devices and other health products raised that total to nearly \$182 million on federal lobbying. The drug industry trade group Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) spent more than \$18 million on lobbying in 2006, the most the group spent in one year since 1998, the earliest year of this analysis. In all, PhRMA has spent \$104 million since 1998. At least six measures supporting re-importation from Canada were introduced in the House and the Senate during the last Congress, but none prevailed.



20 South Vineyard Blvd.
 Honolulu HI 96813
 www.kokuacouncil.org

Hawaii's Voice for a Better Future

Who Are We?

The **Kokua Council** is one of Hawaii's oldest advocacy groups. There is a \$5 annual membership to defray printing and postage costs. At each meeting, topical issues are presented for discussion and possible action. We embrace diversity and extend a special invitation to any senior or intergenerational minded individual interested in advocating for these important issues in Hawaii." All are welcome. **WHEN** 4th Monday of every month, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. **WHERE** Harris United Methodist Church @ Nuuanu and Vineyard Blvd., Ample parking and a light lunch are provided for \$5. **REACH US** c/o Harris United Methodist Church, 20 South Vineyard, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Mission: "Kokua Council seeks to empower seniors and other concerned citizens to be effective advocates in shaping the future and well-being of our community, with particular attention to those needing help in advocating for themselves. "

President	Larry Geller, 540-1928, lgeller@igc.org	Treasurer Ed. Fund	T.J. Davies tjdavies@juno.com
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JOIN KOKUA COUNCIL

Yes! I want to join Kokua Council. Here are my annual dues and my contact information. I understand that my phone number will be added to the Kokua Phone Tree and I will receive the monthly newsletter and occasional e-mails. Our fiscal year starts in January. Please make checks payable to Kokua Council.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS	LIFE MEMBER	ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS	DONATIONS _____
___\$5.00	___\$100.00	___\$25.00	

Name _____ Phone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Mail to: Treasurer, Kokua Council, Harris United Methodist Church, 20 S. Vineyard Blvd.,
 Honolulu, HI 96813