



WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS

Please join us for lunch
MONDAY, August 28, 2006

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: Tofu Spinach Lasagna (Vegan); Chicken Devino, with mushroom & artichoke hearts, brown rice, salad, Dessert by Eloise. \$5.00 donation

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

12:00 Program: Hawaii One Year after Katrina: Are we Ready?

Panelists: Toby Clairmont, Emergency Program Manager, Healthcare Association of Hawaii; John M. Cummings III, Education, Training and Public Information Officer, Oahu Civil Defense Agency; Hawaii State Senator Norman Sakamoto; Ed Teixeira, Vice Director, State Civil Defense

12:45 Announcements

1:00 Adjourn

Luncheon Host: LYNDA JOHNSON

BOARD MEETING: 10:00 a.m. Preceding Lunch

Hawaii Rx-Plus Plan, Phase 2, CIRCUMVENTED *Laura Manis*

At an informational legislative briefing held at the request of consumer advocates (PABEA, Kokua Council, FACE, AARP) revealed that although the intent of the legislature as stated in the Hawaii Rx-Plus law was to negotiate lower prices for prescription drugs, this was not done.

The law, which took effect in July 2004, provides free membership to uninsured and underinsured residents with income below 350% of federal poverty level. Unlike Medicare Part D, there are no age restrictions. Phase 1, the first year of the program, July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005, provided a 10-15% discount on prescriptions filled at participating pharmacies. During that period the Department of

Human Services (DHS) in collaboration with other states was to have negotiated with drug manufacturers to purchase drugs in bulk and achieve an additional discount estimated from 15-60% off retail prices.

In the 2nd year (phase 2, July 1, 2005-June 2006) these new discounted prices were to go into effect. It was understood that a Pharmacy Benefits Manager as used by many states would be hired to handle the negotiations and purchasing of drugs. Instead, Lillian Koller, DHS Director contracted with PBM RxAmerica to do only record keeping and tracking of sales and prescriptions. RxAmerica is owned by Longs Drugs.

When questioned at the briefing, Koller said the law permitted her to ignore the negotiating of discounted prices by stating “may” not “shall” as the directive. In addition, the introduction of Medicare Part D and the high use of generic drugs (72%) in the state would discourage drug companies from negotiating. DHS officials claim drug companies prefer to give rebates only for brand-name prescriptions.

149,460 people and 143 out of 186 pharmacies are enrolled in Rx-Plus. From 1,200 to 1,900 members per month are using the program (2-4% of

the qualified population). When asked about this low usage, the DHS administrators said usage has dropped off since the start of Medicare Part D and confusion among beneficiaries.

Koller did say that changes in the law could be made to increase discounts for the program. The legislators asked that DHS draft changes to the law for them to consider and that the department increase awareness of the program targeting the non-Medicare population.

Notes from July Meeting—Candidate Forum

(D) Rep. Bev Harbin, Incumbent—Legislative priorities: Health Care for all; affordable living for all; a living wage and higher quality of jobs; and protection of our culture.

- **Voter Funded Elections:** “don't send me money, just vote for me;” big money stakeholders have too much power at the legislature.
- **Help for Caregivers:** Provide home care at a proper funding level; increase community based services, more support for our caregivers, and coordination of access to services; workforce development in health care and care giving is a profession that is dwindling.
- **Funding Long Term Care:** Public/private partnership to establish a funding mechanism for people to contribute to a long term care fund; a legislative mandated task force/working group to look into the various mechanisms available to the State and taxpayers.
- **Solutions for the Homeless/ Affordable Housing:** Transitional housing and affordable rentals at 80% or less of the median income or 30% of income levels so that working people will have homes at reasonable cost; affordable and transitional housing to be managed by non-profits who have a stake in people as the driving responsibility; funding must come from the Legislature.

(D) Karl Rhoads—Legislative priorities: Increase the supply of truly affordable housing; reduce crime and drug abuse; improve our public education system from kindergarten through college.

- **Voter Funded Elections:** Strongly support; good fundraisers or those with personal wealth do not necessarily make good legislators.
- **Help for Caregivers:** A shortage of caregivers is a crisis in the making. We need to support family caregivers financially and emotionally so the people who love the person receiving care the most can afford to give the needed care.
- **Solutions for the Homeless/Affordable Housing:** The many causes of homelessness create many parts to a solution. Needed are better outreach to the mentally ill, more drug abuse treatment and of course more truly affordable housing. The market is not providing enough affordable housing. More set asides and tax incentives are needed to encourage the construction of truly affordable housing.
- **Funding Long Term Care:** Market rates for long-term care insurance are so high that few people purchase it. A non-profit based system is needed to lower costs. Otherwise, we will all pay for long-term care through Medicaid.

(R) Collin Wong, Policy Analyst for Gov. Linda Lingle. *Your befuddled reporter(LM) lost her notes and asked each speaker for a written response to their position on the above categories. Wong did not respond.*

Highlights from Kupuna Caucus Meeting—July 28

Mission Statement Version 1.0 sent by Rep. Cynthia Thielen: “The Kupuna Caucus is composed of legislators, representatives of government agencies and community organizations and interested members of the public. The members of the Kupuna Caucus meet periodically to examine, discuss, and educate ourselves about issues of concern to Hawaii’s elderly. Based on these open examinations and discussions, we develop a package

of legislative proposals for consideration in each upcoming regular legislative session. Working together, we hope to enhance the quality of life of Hawaii's rapidly growing elderly population and increase awareness of their needs and concerns through discussion, information and the legislative process." *Yet to be decided was a process for selection of legislative issues to be supported by the Caucus.*

Draft of revised Adult Protective Services bill: After lengthy discussion on including the word "Elderly" and the age over 74, it was decided to keep it because of special treatment and penalties in the Older American Act and other laws for abuse of those designated "elderly."

LTC Ombudsman Request: John McDermott, LTC Ombudsman made the case for additional staff to provide a presence on the neighbor islands—the community would know a local person and know the providers, would be easily accessible, and the program would be cheaper to operate. Currently there are expenses like airfare, meals, local rental cars and sometimes hotel bills. With over 8,000 patients and 731 licensed facilities to oversee, plus recruiting and training volunteers; and with a staff of only 2 and no secretary, the burden has become overwhelming.

Changes in U.S. Aging Highlighted in New Census, NIH Report *Ruth Willenborg*

Below are a sometimes surprising picture in the health and socioeconomic status of our aging population. Some items we already know, but to mention just a few of interest:

- Kalawao, HI was in the highest ten counties nationally with highest percent over age 65 at 32%.
- Majority of men age 65-84 were veterans.
- About 80% of centenarians are women.
- **Some 20% of ALL votes cast were by people age 65 and older.** (Our Congress and others should note that fact in what they are willing to support and the wishes of this group.)
- About 80% of seniors have at least one chronic health condition, with 50% at least two chronic health conditions, which often lead to disability.
- The rates of disability and functional limitation among older population have declined substantially over the past two decades; about one in five older Americans report having a chronic disability.
- Three quarters of the 10.5 million older Americans living alone in 2003 were women.
- In 2000, 4.5% of people aged 75-84 and 18.2% of those 85 and older lived in nursing homes.
- About 3 in 4 nursing home residents are women.

Housing Affordability *Congressman Neil Abercrombie*

The lack of affordable housing is a chronic problem in Hawaii and I am committed to easing this burden. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) in Hawaii for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,159. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities—without paying more than 30% of income on housing—a household must earn \$3,865 monthly or \$46,378 annually. In Hawaii, a minimum wage worker earns an hourly wage of \$6.25. In order to afford the FMR for a two-bedroom apartment, a minimum wage earner must work 143 hours per week. Or a household must include 3.6 minimum wage earners working 40 hours per week year-round in order to make the two-bedroom FMR affordable.

The issue of housing affordability is one of the biggest concerns of kama`aina. A case in point is the widespread community concern about the proposed

sale of one of the state's largest affordable rental projects, Kukui Gardens. I am currently working with all parties, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), to ensure that an equitable solution is found for all. We must seek creative solutions to expand our supply of affordable housing.

I have also joined with my colleagues in Congress to:

1. Expand affordable housing availability and protect HUD affordable housing programs like the Section 811 Disabled Housing program and the Section 202 Elderly Housing program;
2. Provide funding to localities to invest in safer and more affordable communities;
3. Strengthen Section 8, which allows tenants to have a choice in their housing needs through vouchers;
4. Create a National Housing Trust Fund that would

build and preserve 1.5 million units of rental housing

for the lowest income families over the next 10 years.



c/o Harris United Methodist Church
20 South Vineyard Blvd.
Honolulu, HI 96813

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. "

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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

___\$5.00

LIFE MEMBER

___\$100.00

ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

___\$25.00

DONATIONS _____

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