



## HAWAII'S VOICE FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Please join us for lunch  
MONDAY, August 27, 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: Govinda Buffet, Salad, Dessert by Eloise. \$5.00 donation

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

12:00 **PROGRAM:** "Single-Payer Healthcare vs. Business as Usual," *Renee Ing, Jim Brewer*

12:30 Questions and Answers

11:50 Announcements

Lunch Host: Grace Furukawa

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

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### NOTES FROM JULY MEETING

In a 30-minute presentation titled "Divided We Rail," luncheon speaker Dave Rolf told of the pitfalls the Honolulu community would face in adopting a multi-billion dollar transportation project without: 1) a clear way to pay for it, and 2) data that shows such a rail plan will indeed reduce traffic congestion. "Honolulu has a traffic problem," Rolf said, "but we are setting up to fail." He pointed out that the City's own study showed the City's heavy rail proposal will result in a level of service of "F" (severe traffic congestion in the Leeward corridor). "It makes little sense to plan for F," he said. The heavy rail plan may end up with a required \$25-30 per rider subsidy when one takes into account the lost use of money from the billions required to build the system. A better alternative is a 3-lane, reversible, elevated highway which could be built over H-1 and

paid for by the users through electronically-collected fees. Like the governor of Texas said recently, "you can have no lanes, slow lanes, or toll lanes." Dallas has had privately funded cross-town expressways for years. Rolf explained the "Rule of Thirty-Five"—the value of a group of 35 citizens logging in with intelligent input on a public policy decision. A podcast carries the full description of another citizen input rule: The Rule of One. He included a quote from J.M. Keynes: "I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas. Soon or late, it is ideas, not vested interests that are dangerous for good or evil."

To listen to the talk on Kokua Council's website, click on podcast.

Thank you John Cannell, super volunteer. Kokua Council is grateful for all the help John gives at the luncheon meetings and on any other special occasions.

## PEDESTRIAN SAFETY COALITION ORGANIZED

Kokua Council, in response to the Administration's withholding of funds for the Pedestrian Safety Bill, took the lead in organizing a new coalition of supporters of the Pedestrian Safety Bill. Larry Geller is Chair. *Mission: To create safe intersections for Hawaii residents, giving special consideration to the needs of our vulnerable keiki and kupuna. Toward this end:*

- *Petition the government to accelerate their efforts to reduce injuries and deaths at the most dangerous intersections through releasing the funds provided in SB 1191 and collaborating with community advocates.*
  - *Mobilize the public around the issue of pedestrian safety.*
  - *Communicate and raise awareness about the issue.*
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## NEW HOSPITAL DISCHARGE RULES FOR OLDER PATIENTS

A law that went into effect recently which requires hospitals to better ensure that Medicare beneficiaries know their rights before being discharged; and outlines how to object when a patient or family member feels the release is medically premature. While the new rules are designed to protect patients, they will require more paperwork and hours from hospital employees, including additional administrative visits to hospital rooms, which recovering persons may find bothersome. A document has long been issued to inform Medicare beneficiaries of their rights, but the old law's guidelines simply mandated it be provided within two days of a patient's admission—times often preoccupied by the immediacy and stress of tests, procedures, and results. The notification, an "Important Message from Medicare," now features a clearer explanation of patients' rights, and will be provided to families both after arrival and before departure. Hospital staff delivering the information must be able to answer questions about the policy, and for the first time, patients or their legal representatives must sign the paper. If a discharge is contested, hospitals have until noon the next day to provide detailed explanations of why a patient is ready for release and how to continue an appeal.

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## HOUSE ETHICS TASK FORCE FORMED

The interim task force on HR176, to establish a standards of conduct committee, is underway. The bipartisan task force includes Kirk Caldwell, Majority Leader, as chair, and members Lynn Finnegan, Jon Riki Karamatsu, Michael Magaoay, Barbara Marumoto, Colleen Meyer, Blake Oshiro, and Kymberly Pine. The group has met twice and will reconvene on August 21st. At the August meeting, the task force is scheduled to meet with Dan Mollway, executive director of the State Ethics Commission.

*(I encourage those interested to follow this house ethics task force. I will be requesting a May 16 memo from the Speaker on initial recommendations on standards of conduct, (also mentioned in the July 23 agenda. If any of you would like me to email it to you, please let me know. Also, please share information if anyone knows more about this. Sen. Les Ihara)*

The next meeting will be held on August 21, 3 p.m. Room 329, to receive invited comments on initial recommendations of the task force. Note that the current task force membership is four Democrats and four Republicans, but since the house uses strong-chair procedures, the Democrats will still control agendas but will need Republicans to agree on anything explicitly (unless someone is absent).

*(The agenda seems to have been extended to include consideration of House rules, for example, longer time for notification of hearings falling on Mondays. Ed.)*

Rep. Blake Oshiro provided the task force with informational material, including the results of a survey on public disclosure by The Center for Public Integrity, Investigative Journalism in the Public Interest, August 2006. The 43-question survey was designed to determine whether legislators stand to gain personally from actions taken in office. Hawaii ranked as the 2nd best legislature with a grade of "A". The state of Washington ranked #1. In the Governors Disclosure rankings, released on July 19th, Hawaii also ranked #2 behind Washington. However, Washington was the only state to receive an "A", and Hawaii received a "B".

**ADULT:** A person who has stopped growing at both ends and is now growing in the middle

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

**August 21**, 3:00 p.m. State Capitol, Interim Task Force on HR176, Room 329 to establish standards of conduct.

**September 7**, 2:00 p.m. Kupuna Caucus, State Capitol, Room 229, Information and planning for 2008 session

**September 8**, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Jarrett Intermediate School Cafeteria (Palolo). Get to know the new legislators, Americans for Democratic Action/Hawaii.

**October 22**, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Kokua Council Annual Community Forum, Harris Methodist Church, Legislative Issues for 2008.

**Tuesday, October 23**, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, "Fall Prevention: Implementing What Works" Conference. Register by September 24, \$55.00 for Seniors, Students, Caregivers, Call 734-9138.

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### **BILL WOULD LET STATES FORCE DRUG DISCOUNTS**, *Lisa Rein, Washington Post Staff Writer*

U.S. Rep. Chris Van Hollen is preparing legislation that would allow states to make prescription drugs more affordable for low-and moderate-income Americans, a challenge to Bush administration policies that have thwarted such efforts in Maryland and elsewhere.

Van Hollen (D-Md.) introduced early this month, allows states to use their purchasing power to require drug companies to provide discounts on medications for low-wage workers. Under the proposal, states could negotiate the same breaks they get for people on Medicaid, the state-federal health-care program for the poor.

The savings—about 40 percent on the retail price—would be passed on to those with no drug coverage and incomes less than three times the federal poverty level, which is \$10,210 for an individual or \$20,650 for a family of four. Patients would get discount cards to present at their pharmacies. States could penalize nonparticipating drug makers by making their medicines less available.

Those with insurance but with limited or no prescription drug coverage could participate. The program also would cover elderly residents on Medicare whose coverage runs out.

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### **LETTER TO THE EDITOR**, *Congressman Neil Abercrombie*

The Department of Housing and Urban Development lists the Fair Market Rent in Hawaii for 2008 as \$1630 for two bedrooms in the City and County of Honolulu, among the highest in the nation, and nearly impossible for a family earning minimum wage to afford.

I am pleased that Congress reauthorized the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, with a bipartisan vote of 333-83. Section 8 refers to the rental assistance program authorized under Section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, and it helps over 2 million low-income American families with their housing costs. This year, nearly 12,000 Hawaii families have received rental vouchers, and the new law will increase that number, and in turn, keep more families from becoming homeless.

The Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 helps families stabilize their lives, encourages self-sufficiency and homeownership, and gives housing authorities the flexibility to experiment with innovative development and rental policies. This year's legislation keeps what's right about Section 8—an efficient and cost-effective way to provide housing assistance to the poor—and fixes the things that are wrong.

While this law will help many people, it will not end our housing woes. There are an insufficient number of rental units in Hawaii that accept Section 8 vouchers, which limits the effectiveness of this program. And, the units that do accept Section 8 are not always kept in proper repair to ensure the security and safety of residents. The state and federal governments really need to work together to deal with these problems and address tenant concerns about safety. The 2007 Act moves to address this by withholding vouchers from units that do not meet safety standards within 30 days of failing an inspection.

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### **WARNING SIGNS OF INVESTMENT SCAMS**

The job of a con artist is to convince you to part with your money. They'll tell you what you want to hear and prey upon your desire to get a great return on your investment at little or no risk.

- Your profit is guaranteed.
- It's an amazing rate of return.

- You can get in on the ground floor.
- You would be a fool to pass this by.
- This offer is available only today.
- I'll get you the paperwork later.
- Just make your check out to me.



20 South Vineyard Blvd.  
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 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. "

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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.

<b>INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS</b>	<b>LIFE MEMBER</b>	<b>ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS</b>	
___\$5.00 ___RENEWAL	___\$100.00	___\$25.00	<b>DONATIONS</b> _____

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