



WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS

**Please Join Us for Lunch!**

**Monday, January 24, 2005**

**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 - \$5.00 donation
- 11:45 Welcome, Introductions and remarks, Larry Geller, President
- 11:55 Election of Officers

**Program: Publicly Funded Elections**

Laure Dillon, Clean Elections Campaign and Robert Watada, Hawaii State Campaign Spending Commission  
Questions and Answers

- 12:45 Announcements
- 1:00 Adjourn

Host: Carolyn Golojuch

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

**We Need You! Renew Your Membership Now**

2005 looks like a busy year for Kokua Council. We will be keeping you informed and asking for your support on many important issues. First thing, please renew your membership. Let us know that we can count on you.

Good laws do not simply happen, they are fought for by advocates who often spend hours giving testimony and meeting with legislators. It's the hard part of the democratic process. But someone has to do it, right?

Ruth Ellen Lindenberg, Kokua Council's past president, was a respected advocate who testified on auto insurance reforms, patients' rights, health coverage for the uninsured, and a variety of other important social issues right up until her death at 91 last year. Thanks to her efforts over the years, along with the efforts of

other advocates and organizations, we have the benefit of the 1998 Patients' Bill of Rights and Responsibilities Act and other protective legislation. She educated legislators and the public on the need to control health insurance premiums, writing for example in the Star-Bulletin that "Hawaii must look critically at the need for regulation of health-insurance plans" and urging readers to let their views be known to legislators. The bill passed despite marathon lobbying against it.

This coming session we must take up Ruth Ellen's battle. A recent Hawaii Supreme Court case has overturned part of the 1998 law that provides for an appeal to the insurance commissioner if a patient isn't satisfied after going through a health plan's internal appeals process. This means that a patient who is turned

down either has to accept the denial or take the insurer to federal court. Of course, by the time the court hears the case . . . the patient might not be around any longer.

Kokua Council, with the help of its members, has chosen its legislative priorities for

this coming session. We will also respond to developments such as this one. But we need you with us, so please send in your membership renewal today.

### **BOARD MEMBER ROLAND HALPERN LEAVES**

Roland Halpern, Kokua Council Board Member since 2000 has resigned to take a position as National Director of Compassion in Dying. He and his family have moved to Denver this month. On our Board, he has been the lead advocate for Hawaii Rx Plus. He has also testified for affordable long-term care insurance as a member of FACE. An articulate, effective speaker, he has been largely responsible for bringing end-of-life issues to the forefront. We are sorry to lose him but wish him well in his new position.

### **ORGANIZATION OF THE STATE HOUSE RECOGNIZES IMPORTANCE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND CAMPAIGN REFORM**

We are pleased to hear that House Speaker Calvin Say created a new Committee on Housing, headed by Rep. Michael Kahikina, to highlight the need for affordable housing, including rentals. Rep. Sylvia Luke will head the powerful Judiciary Committee. She has reported she will push for campaign finance reform. Both issues are at the top of our legislative priorities list and are tough issues that will require a great deal of community support. We are looking forward to the 2005 session.

### **HAWAII CAREGIVER COALITION FORGING AHEAD**

The Hawaii Caregiver Coalition (HCC) met regularly over the last two months and is building a strong foundation. Education, Outreach, Advocacy, Resource/Recruitment, and Structure/Planning committees have each defined their purpose, established goals and objectives, and identified projects. Each committee will make recommendations for further action.

Kokua Council Vice President Tony Lenzer is Co-Chair of the *Structure/Planning Committee* and Secretary Lyn Moku is on the *Advocacy Committee*. Vice President Laura Manis (representing Kokua Council and HARA) and other Coalition members have already met with

key legislators to ask for their support of caregiver legislation.

Wes Lum of the UH Center on Aging and the Office of Elderly Affairs is a masterful facilitator and is helping the HCC with the organization and planning process. He is tenacious and energetic (. . .he's younger than us), and strongly committed to *helping us help caregivers*. We've made great progress in a short period of time thanks to his help.

Very soon we will be asking for your support of important caregiver legislation. *Can we count on your help?*

### **Effects of Legalization of Assisted Dying**

*by Roland Halpern*

An increasing number of studies have found that legalization of assisted-dying actually reduces the number of physician-assisted deaths. In Oregon, the only state where the practice is currently legal, the rate for assisted deaths is 1 per 1,000, versus a rate of 1 per 250, or four times higher, in states where assisted dying is against the

law and thus practiced in secrecy and without any safeguards. This seeming paradox is explained by the fact that once patients feel safe about expressing their end-of-life concerns they are more willing to explore other treatment alternatives, comforted in knowing there is still a final option should all else fail.

However, in states like Hawaii, where assisted dying is illegal, patients are afraid to approach their doctors on the subject. Patients express concern that even mentioning thoughts about suicide or depression might result in their being institutionalized, being restrained, or having their pain medication reduced or withheld. Among elderly suicides on Oahu, an alarming 78% involved seniors who had only recently been diagnosed with a serious illness. Many of them were suffering from depression or pain, symptoms that could have been treated.

However, they did not feel they could confide in their doctor; and the problem is not just isolated to Hawaii, according to the National Institute for Mental Health: 20% of seniors who committed suicide did so on the same day as their doctor visit, 40% within a week of their visit, and 70% within a month. What did they want to say but couldn't?

Imagine how different the outcome might have been if assisted dying were a legal option. One Oregon study revealed that 90% of patients initially considering assisted suicide changed their minds after talking to their doctor, and of those who actually went on to receive a prescription, almost half never used it. The few that did use the medication were able to experience a peaceful and dignified death surrounded by family and friends as opposed to the most frequently used methods used in Hawaii, which include hanging, jumping, drowning and self-inflicted gunshot wounds.

Although 75% of the public in Hawaii supports assisted dying, few legislators are willing to take on the pressure from their constituents. If you believe that end-of-life decisions should be a matter of personal choice and not prohibited by the government, please contact your elected officials and let them know how you feel.

### Death With Dignity By The Numbers

80%	Percentage of people who say they would like to die at home
22.7%	Percentage of Hawaii residents that die at home
12.6%	Percentage of Hawaii residents that die in nursing homes
64.7%	Percentage of Hawaii residents who die in a hospital
20%	Percentage of elderly that commit suicide the same day that they visited their doctor
40%	Percentage who committed suicide within one week of visiting their doctor
70%	Percentage who committed suicide within one month of visiting their doctor
78%	Percentage of elderly suicides on Oahu occurring shortly after the patient was diagnosed with a serious illness
53%	Percentage of those patients who were experiencing pain
8	Number of Oregon physicians who signed up for course in pain management before enactment of Oregon's Death With Dignity Law
150+	Number of Oregon physicians who signed up immediately after Oregon's law went into effect
30%	Increase in Oregon hospice referrals following enactment of Death With Dignity law
69%	Percentage of Oregon doctors surveyed who say they have taken steps to improve their knowledge of mental health conditions including depression following enactment of law
76%	Percentage of Oregon doctors surveyed who say they have taken steps to increase their knowledge of pain management following enactment of law
70%	Percentage of increase in Oregon for the use of medical morphine, considered the "gold standard" for treating terminal cancer pain
94%	Percent of Oregon patients using the law who were able to die at home
53,544	Number of deaths in Oregon between 1997 through 2003 as the result of a terminal illness



Kokua Council for Senior Citizens of Hawaii  
 Education Fund, Inc.  
 20 South Vineyard Blvd.  
 Honolulu, HI 96813

### Who Are We?

The **Kokua Council** is one of Hawaii's oldest advocacy groups. 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. "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. There is a \$5 annual membership to defer printing and postage costs. At each meeting, topical issues are presented for discussion and possible action.

**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

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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	____\$100.00	____\$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