



## HAWAII'S VOICE FOR A BETTER FUTURE

**Please join us for lunch  
MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 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: Various Pizza, salad, Dessert by Eloise. \$5.00 donation

11:45 Welcome, Introductions and Remarks, *Larry Geller, President*  
Election of Board Directors

12:00 PROGRAM: DOUG KREIDER, HAWAII ADULT MENTAL HEALTH DIVISION; THE OASIS PROJECT

Lunch Host: Bob Henninger

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

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### **THE OASIS PROJECT**

Mental health, especially for older adults, has never received the attention it should. Perhaps this is about to change. OASIS stands for Older Adult Specialized Information Services. The state has recently received a grant titled "Improving Older Adult Mental Health Services in Hawaii through Infrastructure Development and Family Psycho-education".

The aim of the project is "to increase the capacity of the State of Hawaii to provide specialized and enhanced mental health and social services to people over 60". To do this, education and support will be provided to caregivers and service providers. In addition, enhanced clinical services will be provided to older adults who have serious mental illnesses. How will this project work? Does the legislature need to be involved?

This month's meeting will provide some answers and perhaps raise more questions.

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### **REPORT OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE-Sam Cox, Chair,**

Nominated for the 2007 Board of Directors – 2 year term:

Florence Lau    Richard Miller    Elenore Gallant    Marilyn Seely    Laura Manis    Tony Lenzer  
George Fox    Jim Shon

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Time to pay your 2007 Kokua Council Dues. Look at your address label to see the last payment date. Individual dues continue to be \$5.00, Lifetime \$100, Organization \$25. Send payments to Treasurer, Kokua Council, Harris United Methodist Church, 20 S. Vineyard, Honolulu HI 96813. Donations welcome.

**PRESIDENT'S LETTER, *Larry Geller***

Imagine this: You call your medical specialist for an appointment, resigned to waiting a month to six weeks before you can be seen. Instead, you hear an operator's voice announcing the phone is disconnected. Or more urgently, you or someone you know, on vacation on a Neighbor Island, gets into an auto accident and there's no orthopedic surgeon on call to put you back together again. Or you read in the paper that your neighborhood hospital is forced to give up some of its services in order to stay open at all.

Doctors have written several op-ed articles and letters to the editor warning of the consequences of decreasing reimbursements and high insurance premiums. You also read that Kahuku Hospital is entering bankruptcy, which is discouraging, but at least they might not close.

The first step in the cure is to realize that there is no justification for decreased reimbursements

while health insurance companies grow fat with profits, salaries and adding to ballooning reserve funds. Malpractice insurers gouge doctors even in states where so-called "tort reform" has been passed. While many doctors push for tort reform, I think this is a case where we need a second opinion. Hawaii has had excellent luck with insurance regulation. Our insurance commissioner could bring instant relief to doctors, given the chance, without affecting consumers' rights to recover damages when things go wrong.

Demand that your legislators pass laws this session to re-regulate health care premiums, increase reimbursements to sensible levels, and bring malpractice insurance premiums under regulation. Here's an issue that affects all of us, young or old. You can help by contacting your state representatives today and voicing your own opinion on how to keep all of us healthy in Hawaii.

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### **Public Access Room** The Hawaii State Capitol's gone wireless!

For those of you with wireless capability on your computer laptops and notebooks, tracking legislation and communicating while at the Capitol just got easier. While the Public Access Room still has its array of desktop computers for you to use, you can now enjoy free wireless Internet connectivity in our office (room 401), as well as House and Senate conferences rooms, the auditorium, certain areas of the chamber-level hallway, and the central corridors along railings on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors.

The service is free, and access codes and registration are not required. Those with PDAs and Palms will also be able to connect. Since access is not secure and does not implement any encryption, users are encouraged to make sure that their antivirus software is in place, and to use encrypted pages to send and receive confidential data. Your wireless network card must be 802.11b compliant to use the network.

When at the Capitol and within the range of an access point, the legislative public network will appear on your wireless device as the available wireless network named "HISTATELEG."

We hope that the new wireless access helps to make it easier for you to participate in the State legislative process. Please don't hesitate to stop by, email or give us a call if you have any questions!  
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 401, phone 808/587-0478.

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### **REGISTERING YOUR SUPPORT FOR A BILL: WHAT NOT TO DO** *Sen. J. Kalani English*

- Don't send an e-mail rather than a handwritten note or letter. Phone calls are better, they're counted.
- Don't make correspondence too long. One or two paragraphs are usually enough. You're more likely to keep the attention of a recipient who has thousands of communications to read.
- Don't attach more than a few pages of supporting information.
- Don't send emails to more than one legislators, it will get spam-filtered.
- Don't use petitions rather than individualized correspondence. Petitions are generally suspect because of illegible names or contact information.

John Stossel looks at how U. S. public schools cheat kids out of a quality education. He questions government officials, union leaders, parents and students and learns surprising things about what's going on and reports on innovating programs. DVD Video, 50 minutes, available from John White, tel. 262-9314.

*Experience is a wonderful thing. It enables you to recognize a mistake when you make it again.*

**PREMIUMS VERSUS PAYCHECKS** FAMILIES USA STUDY

Health insurance costs have far outpaced average earnings for Hawaii workers, causing many to lose coverage and go into debt, Families USA reported. More than half of bankruptcies are due at least partly to problems with medical costs, the nonprofit health consumer organization said. From 2000 to 2006 in Hawaii, Ron Pollack, Families USA executive director, said: "Hawaii families have been hit hard in the pocketbooks due to skyrocketing health costs and stagnant wages. Hawaii workers also are getting fewer benefits and/or higher deductibles, co-payments and co-insurance. Health care costs are absorbing an ever-larger portion of family budgets, and it is clear why many Hawaii families feel worse off economically than they did six years ago. Non-elderly uninsured Isle residents total more than 116,000, about 10.7

percent of the non-elderly population."

» **Health care premiums rose 4.2 times faster than average wages.**

» **Annual premiums went from \$6,047 to \$9,952 in the six years, an increase of \$3,906 or 64.6 percent.**

» **Median earnings went from \$26,180 to \$30,205 in the six-year period, or 15.4 percent.**

The Families USA cites national problems with rising health care costs and stagnant wages. "It is high time for national leaders to address this growing problem and make it a top national priority."

Families USA based its report on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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### **One of Speaker Hastert's Final Acts Benefits Insurers**

In one of his final acts as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Rep. Dennis Hastert (R-IL) used the tax bill to create a major change in Medicare policy eagerly sought by a few health insurers, in particular a company headquartered in his home state of Illinois. According to the *New York Times*, the provision "showed up mysteriously after House and Senate negotiators had finished writing the bill," and was "added by the House Rules Committee, just a few hours before the bill went to the House floor."

Aon Corporation, which is headquartered in Chicago, stands to benefit the most from the change, which permits certain Medicare Advantage plans, but not others, to enroll people throughout the year. An Aon lobbyist admitted that his company was "actively involved in consideration of this piece of legislation." Senate Finance Committee Chairman Charles Grassley (R-IA) was among those criticizing the policy change for treating some plans unfairly. The Center for American Progress think-tank reminded its newsletter readers recently that last December, Hastert also helped to insert a provision in the Defense Appropriations bill that granted vaccine manufacturers near-total immunity for injuries or deaths (even in cases of "gross negligence") caused by their drugs during a viral pandemic, such as an outbreak of the avian flu. That legislation was worth billions of dollars to a small group of drug makers. "Right up until the bitter end, the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress was on the side of insurance and drug companies but not doing enough for seniors," said **Edward Coyle**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "We look forward to a refreshing change next year with the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress."

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### **Seniors Living in Better Health than Ever Before**

The health and daily function of older U.S. residents has improved as the incidence of chronic disability has dropped dramatically, according to a study released this month by the National Institute on Aging. The study found that the percentage of individuals over age 65 who have heart disease, arthritis, hypertension or other chronic health conditions dropped from 27% in 1982 to 19% last year. During the same period, the percentage of seniors in nursing homes dropped from 8% to 4%. Researchers attribute improved health among seniors to better medications for treating chronic diseases and improved living conditions for older people. "Many older Americans are able to recover from injuries such as those sustained in a fall, or to live an independent life while managing a chronic illness," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

A new resource: Data Center on Hawaii's Aging : [www.uhfamily.hawaii.edu/datacenter/aging/](http://www.uhfamily.hawaii.edu/datacenter/aging/)



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
Vice President	Tony Lenzer, 261-2095, tlenzer@hawaii.rr.com	Treasurer Advocacy	Evelyn Shepard, 595-4025
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Secretary	Betty Sugarman, 261-8936, betty333@hawaiiantel.net		
Newsletter	Jeanne Y. Ohta, 373-3186, jyohta@hawaii.rr.com	Website:	www.kokuacouncil.org

**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