



WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS

Please join us for lunch

**MONDAY, MARCH 27, 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 Pizza, Salad, Drinks, and Dessert by Eloise. \$5.00 Donation

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

11: 50 Legislative Report

**12:00 Program: Report from the Hawaii Health Taskforce Exploring Hawaii's Uninsured,**  
*Carol Taniguchi, Laurel Johnston, Hawaii Institute for Public Affairs' Uninsured Project*

12:45 Announcements

1:00Adjourn

Lunch Host: Diane Stowell

Board Meeting: 10:00 am preceding lunch

**Please pay your 2006 dues:** \$5.00 to Kokua Council, mail to Treasurer, Kokua Council, c/o Harris Methodist Church, 20 S. Vineyard Blvd., Honolulu HI 96813

**ABOUT THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM**

One of the major health initiatives from the 2005 legislature established a temporary health care task force to develop a plan for implementing health care for all Hawaii residents. The law requires the task force to compare the costs of the current health care system with various options to decrease the uninsured population, including a single-payer system. The consulting service analyzing the costs and benefits of a single-payer system is expected to report by the end of March.

**ELECTED AT 2006 KOKUA COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING**

Bob Henninger presented the slate for officers. The slate was elected:

President—Larry Geller

Secretary—Betty Sugarman

Vice President—Laura Manis

Treasurer—Sam Cox

Vice President—Tony Lenzer

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER—*Larry Geller*

Most of us dream of happy things--like our next vacation, or a new home, apartment or car. Or of creative things--we'd like to write a book one day or learn a new language perhaps. Probably no one dreams of being a caregiver--suddenly having to take care of a parent or relative.

Caregiving and support for caregivers was a prominent theme at the 2005 Silver Legislature, which originated some bills that are now working their way through the "real" legislature. Some current initiatives aim to provide more affordable resources across the state, expand chore services, and increase the availability of professional and paraprofessional services. Information and coordination of services

can be improved so that families can make better decisions. Whether the care is as simple as helping administer medicines during the day or whether it is cooking meals or providing more personal care, caregiving is an important role in our society. We should support those who take on this work, whether in the home or in a special setting.

Kookia Council members can make a difference by checking with the Council or with the Executive Office on Ageing to see which bills are still alive in the legislature, then call your senator or representative and ask that they support our caregivers.

## LEGISLATIVE NEWS

Good news! **HB2670** (to create a Hawaii Healthcare Authority to develop a plan to universally provide health care for all of Hawaii's residents) passed out of House Finance Committee and has gone over to the Senate. By the time you read this, the bill will have been heard on Monday, March 13. Hopefully it will have passed and is on the way to Ways and Means. The bill sets up a health authority to develop a comprehensive plan to provide universal health care to Hawaii (a Silver Legislature bill).

In addition, bills that we support and have crossed over to the other house are:

**SB3274** provides a **refundable** tax credit to caregivers for qualified recipients. This bill will help low income and pensioners who do not pay enough state taxes to qualify for a regular tax credit as in HB2097.

**SB3252** Caregiver Omnibus, directs Executive Office on Aging to coordinate a statewide system of

family caregiver support services and policies.

**SB3253** establishes a joint legislative committee on family caregiving.

**SB2343** Criminal History Checks, finally legal concerns have been worked out and after many years of advocating by our Bob Masuda seems on its way, hopefully.

**SB2443** Grandparents Visitation, another Silver Legislature bill, establishes a joint legislative task force to untangle the legal obstacles to grandparents visiting grandchildren.

**SB3229** appropriates funds for chore services.

**SB2176**, appropriates funds for homeless and transitional housing programs; appropriates funds to repair vacant public housing units; provides incentives to increase the supply of low-income rental housing, and implements recommendations of the task force.

## HEALTH INSURANCE REGULATION IN DANGER—*Richard Miller*

In 2002, the Hawaii Legislature gave our insurance commissioner the job of regulating the rates we pay for health insurance to ensure that they will "not be excessive, inadequate or unfairly discriminatory and shall be reasonable in relation to benefits provided". Unfortunately, that law sunsets on June30 unless we take action. Virtually all states regulate health insurance rates.

Our Prepaid Health Care Act requires that Hawaii employers purchase health insurance for most

employees who work 20 hours or more each week. In return, the state has an obligation to ensure that the rates employers' pay is fair, reasonable and nondiscriminatory.

Rate regulation also encourages new insurers to enter a market like Hawaii's, where there are few competitors and they largely control the market. The representative of Summerlin Life and Health Insurance Company testified that the existence of state rate regulation was a condition to its entry.

Since the rate regulation passed, our insurance commissioner has required health insurers to reduce their rates, saving Hawaii citizens about \$18 million. Actually, much more may have been saved because health

insurers voluntarily reduce their rates so the commissioner won't deem them excessive. Please call your legislative representatives and urge them to support **HB 2879 and SB 2917**. (Kokua Council participated in advocating for the original bill.)

### **Notes from Last Month's Meeting: WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING, *Al Hamai, Delegate***

In late March 2006, within 100 days of the Conference, the Policy Committee must present an interim report to state governors. Then by June 14 the Committee must present its final report to the President and Congress on the actions taken at the Conference, its recommendations and proposed strategies to implement the fifty resolutions. The Policy Committee indicated that the reports would include all views expressed at the implementation sessions.

I want to also convey to you some disappointments, especially on how the Conference was organized. We were disappointed that we received the proposed resolutions on the day we left for the Conference, which prevented us from consulting others. We were also disappointed that President Bush was the first President not to attend a White House Conference on Aging and we know from TV accounts that while our Conference was in session, he chose to visit a senior center in the Washington, D.C. area, urging seniors to sign up for the Medicare Plan D. We were also disappointed that nearly all the speakers at the plenary session were administration officials or corporate leaders, not grass roots advocates of senior issues. We were further disappointed that there was no opportunity during any of the plenary sessions for any delegate to address the Conference. Incidentally the entire New York state delegation filed a letter of complaint on how the Conference was organized.

Yet, as a Hawaii delegation, we did the best we could. We left this Conference basically feeling good about what we had accomplished especially during

the all day session when we proposed, discussed and voted on implementation strategies for the fifty resolutions, and getting our five Hawaii priority aging issues on the national aging agenda.

Our work to implement the strategies adopted at the Conference is really just beginning. We need to work together, all of us, with members of our state government and members of our Hawaii congressional delegation to implement those strategies that will help make life better for our aging population and really for our country.

#### **The top ten WHCOA resolutions:**

1. Reauthorize Older Americans Act
2. Develop a Coordinated, Comprehensive Long-Term Care Strategy
3. Insure that Older Americans Have Transportation Options
4. Strengthen and Improve Medicaid
5. Strengthen and Improve Medicare
6. Support Geriatric Education and Training for all Health Care Professionals Paraprofessionals, Health Profession Students and Direct Care Workers
7. Promote Innovative Models of Non-Institutional Long-Term Care
8. Improve Recognition, Assessment, and Treatment of Mental Illness and Depression Among Older Americans
9. Attain Adequate Numbers of Healthcare Personnel in All Professions Who are Skilled, Culturally Competent, and Specialized in Geriatrics
10. Improve State and Local Based Integrated Delivery System.

#### **KOKUA COUNCIL MEMBERS RECOGNIZED BY THE HAWAII HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Three of the four persons recognized by the Representatives are members of Kokua Council. Laura Manis, Tony Lenzer and Bruce McCullough were awarded framed certificates of recognition at a ceremony in the chamber of the House on February 16. The awards were given "for impacting the lives of numerous families and ultimately helping many of Hawaii's Kupuna in their elder years." Rose Nakamura, Founder of Project Dana was the fourth recipient.

"If you can remain calm, you don't have all the facts."



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. 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. “

Website:	www.kokuacouncil.org	Secretary	Betty Sugarman, 261-8936, betty333@lava.net
President	Larry Geller, 540-1928, lgeller@igc.org	General Info	Eloise Monsarrat, 839-1545
Vice President	Tony Lenzer, 261-2095, tlenzer@hawaii.rr.com	Newsletter	Jeanne Y. Ohta, 373-3186, jyohta@hawaii.rr.com
Vice President	Laura Manis, 597-8838, manis@lava.net		

**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	<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