



WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS

Please Join Us for Lunch!

October 24, 2005

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Note extended time

Miyama Main Hall, Harris United Methodist Church

Nuuanu Ave. and South Vineyard Blvd.

Ample parking - driveway off Nuuanu Ave.

Community Forum: Pre-Hawaii Silver Legislature Activity:

From Grumble to Rumble

11:30 Luncheon: (optional) – Pizza, Salad, Drinks, Dessert by Eloise \$5.00 donation

AGENDA

- **Introductions and Welcome- Larry Geller, President**
- **Representative Brian Schatz: Best ways to convince your legislators.**
- **Citizen Advocate: The other side; how a private citizen can be successful.**
- **Suzanne Marinelli, Director, Public Access Room, State Capitol: Getting through the maze. How the legislature works.**
- **Top issues generated at spring meetings with local senior groups.**
- **Participating in the Silver Legislature. November 17-18 at the State Capitol**

Rep. Schatz will provide real-world grounding and reaction to the issues raised. Enjoy the enthusiasm and interest of the participants going through this experience.

The community forum is free and open to the Public.

The list of issues will be used as a basis for the issues discussion segment of the forum. However, if you have an issue not listed, we would welcome your thoughts. This is the time to make converts to your cause.

Lunch Host: Jan Bappe

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

President's Letter: Asking for trouble, *Larry Geller*

Hurricane Katrina is no longer front-page news, but its memory is still fresh. We know from our experience of Iniki which ravaged Kauai and Leeward Oahu that the same can happen here.

The earliest reports from Louisiana revealed that government was failing at every level, and because of these failures, countless lives were lost. Survivors coming from the flooded areas of New Orleans have no homes to return to. Because there was no ounce of prevention, the nation's treasury is being strained to provide an inadequate cure. People were stranded trying to evacuate New Orleans.

What will happen here? People trapped in the Superdome and the New Orleans convention center experienced filthy and disgusting conditions. What will happen here? Will our glass and tinsel Convention Center even hold up in a storm? Food, water and medicine failed to arrive for days and weeks. Hawaii is a bunch of small islands in middle of the vast Pacific Ocean, far from any rescue services. What will happen here?

At hearings held at the State Capitol September 12 and 13 to assess Hawaii's preparedness, the response I heard over and over to legislator's questioning was "it's a work in progress."

This is not good enough. We don't know when the next storm or tsunami will reach our shores. We do know that the people who will suffer most, including the most deaths, will be the elderly, those with special needs such as disabilities or mobility issues, and the poor. Disaster preparedness is interrelated and interwoven with other persistent issues we have failed to solve. For example, there are not enough shelters for the homeless at present, what about in a disaster? Schools were mentioned as storm shelters, but many have louvered windows or other problems that rule them out. And who, other than the principal, has the keys? Highways are near gridlock now, what will happen as a storm approaches?

More personally, do you know what you should do and where you will go in a disaster? What's the plan? What will your aged friend or relative living on an upper floor in a high rise do without elevators, electricity or water? Also, shouldn't we be asking, "Why build glass-walled apartment towers in the Kakaako flood plain?" Will the medical school spill toxic biological agents if hit by a storm? What about the proposed Cobalt-60 irradiation facility just off Lagoon Drive at the airport?

Are we simply asking for trouble? The legislature is to conduct further hearings in November. We need to see detailed plans and timetables for their implementation. Contact your state senators and representatives and ask them to insist on plans that will hold water.

Notes from September Meeting: "Working together to end homelessness in Hawaii".

Laura Theilen, Executive Director, Affordable Housing and Homeless Alliance

With the cost of housing steadily increasing throughout the islands of Hawaii, there is an ever-increasing need to address the issue of affordable housing for our community members. The Alliance, along with many other agencies throughout the islands have been working together to increase the number of affordable housing units available in the community while at the same time decreasing the number of those who experience homelessness.

The issue of homelessness is very complex and therefore requires multiple approaches to address this issue. Partners In Care is the homeless coalition on Oahu and works with all of the providers of services for those who are homeless. The Hawaii Policy Academy on Families Experiencing Homelessness focuses on systemic changes that must be accomplished in

order to address family homelessness. The Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness works on addressing the needs of those individuals who are considered to be chronically homeless. There are other groups that focus on short-term approaches to addressing homelessness including the Solidarity With the Homeless group.

All of these groups are dedicated to the idea that homelessness can be prevented and ended. Through working at the Legislature and City Council to remove barriers that are often encountered by those experiencing homelessness and working with community members to address the various needs of those who are homeless we can end homelessness and prevent future homelessness. If you would like to get involved in one of these groups or would like

more information on the issue of homelessness and affordable housing, please contact Laura E. Thielen at 845-4565.

Message from Thielen: *"We won a little victory in regards to the city council resolution regarding affordable housing. Based on our encouragement not to reinstate the moratorium*

on requirements of developers to sell affordable units to those individuals in the target group, Councilwoman Marshall has decided not to hear the resolution [at this time.] It may come up at a later date and if it does, I will let you know so that you can pass it on to your constituency."

LETTER FROM CONGRESSMAN NEIL ABERCROMBIE

"Starting January 1, 2006, Medicare will offer prescription drug coverage through new private drug plans and through Medicare managed care plans (now called "Medicare Advantage" plans). I opposed the law that created this program because the drug benefit is inadequate, overly complex and was set up to maximize profits for the pharmaceutical and HMO companies rather than maximizing help to Medicare beneficiaries. That being said, people need to be armed with the information necessary to make the best decision about whether to join and - if so - which plan may best meet their needs.

Whether you are a senior, a person with a disability or someone trying to help a parent or friend, I encourage you to carefully research the available options BEFORE making a choice. Most people have until May 15th, 2006 to sign up for a plan before late enrollment penalties apply, so take your time, check your facts and know your options.

I've tried to gather some basic information to help you face these complicated choices."

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS: THE NEW DRUG BENEFIT

Whether to enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan depends upon what kind of coverage, if any, you have today. If you have prescription drug coverage through a retiree plan: Check with your former employer about your options before doing anything. If you are happy with your employer coverage, and it is continuing, you should not need to do anything.

CAUTION: If you drop your employer or union health coverage, you may not be able to rejoin it later. If you are on HMSA and Medicare: Your personal drug coverage will end on December 31, 2005 and your new Medicare-based coverage will begin on January 1, 2006. Once information is available on options in our area, you should choose the plan that best suits your needs.

CAUTION: To receive free premiums, you will need to pick a plan with average or below average premiums. If you fail to choose a plan, you will be automatically assigned to a plan. You will be able to change plans monthly if need be.

If you are currently enrolled in a Medicare managed Care plan (such as Kaiser, etc.): Your plan will send you information about your options this month. If you want to stay with your current plan and it offers a prescription drug plan, you may enroll.

If you do not want to remain in that plan, you may either enroll in a different Medicare Managed Care plan or return to traditional Medicare and select a private drug plan.

If you currently do not have prescription drug coverage: Evaluate your needs and investigate your options, but remember monthly premiums will be higher if you do not enroll by May 15, 2006. You will also want to determine if you are eligible for limited income assistance.

IMPORTANT DATES: October 1, 2005: You will begin receiving information on drug plans available in your community.

November 15, 2005: The enrollment period for Medicare Drug Benefit (Part D) begins.

December 31, 2005: The last day to enroll to have coverage that begins on January 1, 2006.

January 1, 2006: Coverage begins for beneficiaries who enrolled by December 31, 2005.

May 15, 2006: Last day to enroll in a Medicare drug plan without incurring a 1% per month premium surcharge and last day to enroll to receive any benefits in 2006.

November 15, 2006: The open enrollment period for Medicare Drug Benefit (Part D) begins for 2007. This is also the first opportunity for those who enrolled in a Medicare drug plan for 2006 to switch plans if they wish.

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 defer 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