



WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

NO LUNCHEON MEETING IN DECEMBER

SEE YOU JANUARY 25, 2016

Kokua Council Windward: Thursday, December 10: “Critical Issues for 2016” with Patrick Zukemura *COMMUNITY WELCOME*

11:30 (Optional) — **Buffet Lunch** in Dining Room. \$11 Reservation and Information: Samuel Cox (808) 779-3606 or revsamuelcox@gmail.com.

12:30 Program: Patrick Zukemura was the Lead Organizer for **Faith Action for Community Equity** on Oahu from 2008-2012 when he retired. He remains active in FACE Oahu and co-chairs their Long Term Care Task Force. He is their President Elect for 2016. He will outline critical issues for seniors in 2016 including Long Term Health Care. Kokua Council is a partner member of FACE.

1:30 Adjourn

TIME TO PAY YOUR 2016 KOKUA COUNCIL DUES. Look at your address label to see last payment date. Individual memberships are \$10.00, Lifetime \$100, Organization \$25.00. Send payments to Kokua Council, c/o Harris Methodist Church, 20 S. Vineyard Blvd., Honolulu HI 96813. Donations are also welcome. Check our website at <http://www.kokuacouncil.org> Note: the mailing list is undergoing revision, there may be some errors in that date on your label! We hope to have everything in shape soon.

Inside:

Poverty increasing in Hawaii as median income decreases, meaning more are searching for vanishing affordable housing (see p.3)
2015 Senior Information handbook available for pickup or download (see p.2)

2015 Senior Information and Assistance Handbook available for pickup or download

Pick up your copy of this handy resource at American Savings Bank branches—or download from this location: <https://tinyurl.com/seniorbook>

The handbook is 96 pages of solid, usable information including important phone numbers, lists of services, sources of health care and more.

Backup your important data—it's almost tax time

A word to the wise is sufficient, they say. What they don't say is that hard disks don't last as long as they used to.

The hard disk in your computer **will fail one day**. So make sure you have a backup of your important data as tax time approaches.

Editorial: New York Mayor Bill de Blasio's plan for affordable housing meets with widespread resistance, but at least that city has a plan

New York City resembles Honolulu and Los Angeles in that these three cities have long neglected to provide opportunities for low-income families seeking rental housing. In these three cities homelessness is increasing while national figures are on a steady decline.

New York media report widespread opposition to Mayor Bill de Blasio's plan to build 200,000 affordable housing units. But at least there is a plan. New York is putting in place firm, detailed plans to construct tens of thousands of affordable units. By affordable, the Mayor asserts that at least 40% of the units would have to be set aside for renters who earn between \$23,350 and \$38,850 per year. Many critics claim this is not low enough.

At least 75 percent of families receiving Section 8 assistance must have incomes below 30 percent of the area median income (AMI).

Jumping to Hawaii, 30% of AMI for a single person is \$17,000. For a 2-person household it is \$19,400, and for a family of four it is \$24,300. Reading the newspaper, we still see figures like 140%, 120% or 80% of AMI. So while New York has a plan that is still controversial, at least it has taken aim at the correct target. Honolulu City government has only talk, and the commercial media, biased as it is toward developer-advertisers, refuses to face the facts on the ground.

Dozens of New York's community boards have already voted against the Mayor's plan. The good news is that he is engaging the opponents and one hopes they will work things out. Here in Honolulu there is no plan that can even be dissected or disputed.

In an op-ed published in the December 6, 2015 Star-Advertiser we read that FACE (Faith Action for Community Equity) supports Honolulu's rail project because 50,000 affordable housing units are expected to be built around the stations. Unfortunately, they seem to be acting on, well, faith. Faith is fine. But at night I set the alarm clock so that I will wake up the next morning on time. If we want 50,000 affordable housing units we must act. So where is the plan? When can we discuss it at Honolulu's neighborhood boards?

We need to plan better. Kapolei failed as a "second city" and now contributes to urban sprawl and greatly increasing traffic congestion.

How to improve our urban planning? Including the citizens of the city in the planning process would be a good first step. We know what we need, and our decisions are not clouded by large campaign contributions from developers and the construction industry.

Poverty increasing in Hawaii as median income decreases, meaning more are searching for vanishing affordable housing

A new report based on US census data is available on the web at <http://census.hawaii.gov/acs/acs-2014/>. Many of the numbers are quite sobering. Some easier to understand national maps can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/increasedpoverty>.

The data is very fresh—it was released on December 3 by the Census Bureau. It is an update to their American Community Survey.

All counties in Hawaii were flagged by census data as showing an increase in the percentage of population in poverty, 2010-2014 over 2005-2009. The data shows that poverty is increasing in 1,052 counties nationally between 2010 and 2014, but dropped in only 136 counties.

Although it is not just our problem, we cannot be complacent. The factors contributing to poverty here include, of course, the high costs of housing and other costs of living coupled with a predominance of low-wage jobs. We ignore these factors at our peril.

Another map indicates that real median household income for the same period is decreasing in Hawaii except on Oahu, where it remained the same. Even "the same" is a loss since the cost of living has increased over that time and continues to increase steadily.

If the numbers don't lie, then our housing and homelessness crises are set to worsen. It will be increasingly difficult for many families and those on a fixed income to survive. We can expect continued out-migration and a brain drain as young people leave the state in search of better opportunities and a lower cost of living. In turn, the median age of our population will increase all the more.

Limited purpose driver's licenses available in Hawaii starting January 1

Starting January 1, a person may apply for a limited purpose instruction permit, limited purpose provisional driver's license or limited purpose driver's license which does not require submission of documentary proof of legal presence or proof of a social security number. Applicants are still required to provide proof of legal name, date of birth and principal residence. This will benefit undocumented immigrants and those who cannot locate the documents strictly mandated by the feds for a standard driver's license, but it cannot be used as identification when boarding a plane for this same reason.

The limited purpose driver's license: is valid for eight years for licensees who are 25 through 71 years of age; for four years for licensees who are 24 years of age or younger; and for two years for licensees who are 72 years of age or older.



Kokua Council for Senior Citizens of Hawaii Education Fund, Inc.
 20 South Vineyard Blvd.
 Honolulu, HI 96813
<http://www.kokuacouncil.org>

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No regular meeting at Harris this month. Happy Holidays!
Kokua Council Windward, Thursday, December 10: "Critical Issues for 2016" with Patrick Zukemura--see inside for details

Who Are We?

Kokua Council is one of Hawaii's oldest advocacy groups. There is a **\$10.00 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. There is ample parking. A light lunch is provided for a \$5 donation. **REACH US** c/o Harris United Methodist Church, 20 South Vineyard, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Mission: "Kokua Council advocates and 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."

Board Members

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Website: www.kokuacouncil.org Newsletter editor: Larry Geller

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. The fiscal year starts in January. Please make checks payable to **Kokua Council**.

Individual Member __ \$10.00 Life Member __ \$100.00 Organizational Member __ \$25.00

Donations: 501(c)(4) Advocacy _____ Education Fund: 501(c)(3) _____ (Tax Deductible)

Date _____

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Mail to: Treasurer, Kokua Council, Harris United Methodist Church, 20 S. Vineyard Blvd., Honolulu, HI 96813