



WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS

PLEASE JOIN US FOR LUNCH

Monday, August 28, 2017 Miyama Main Hall, Harris United Methodist Church

11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Nuuanu Ave. and S. Vineyard Blvd.—Ample parking—driveway off Nuuanu Ave

Agenda:

11:30 Luncheon (optional): Various Pizzas, Salad, and Dessert—\$5.00 Donation

12:00 Program: Panel discussion: **“Fighting back against injustice, the battle for condo owners' rights”**

Representatives of government and the legal community are invited panelists. And representatives of the condo community, including condo management, association board directors, and owners, will also participate. It should be a lively discussion!

1:00 Adjourn

Kokua Council Windward: Thursday, August 10, 2017: “Caregiver empowerment: Building Care Partnerships”
COMMUNITY WELCOME

Pohai Nani, Club Room, 2nd Floor, 45-090 Namoku Street, Kaneohe

11:30 (Optional) — Buffet Lunch in Dining Room, \$11. Reservation and Information: Samuel Cox (808) 779-3606 or revsamuelcox@gmail.com or Richard Miller 254-1796.

12:30 Program: Sue Pignataro: **“Caregiver empowerment: Building Care Partnerships”**

Sue Pignataro is the volunteer facilitator for the Caregivers Support Group that meets at Castle Hospital. She is a retired homecare nurse. She has many years' experience working with caregivers and those needing care.

Hawaii has the highest percentage of senior citizens in the country. As we grow older we are also susceptible to Alzheimer's and other disabilities. Sooner or later most of us will become caregivers or need caregiving ourselves. A sobering fact that often caregivers pass away before those they are caring for! There is a need for caregiver employment. Sue will give us her perspective and will be open for suggestions and questions.

1:30 Adjourn

Notes from July 24 Meeting with Speaker Scott Saiki, Vice Speaker Della Au Belatti, and Senator Les Ihara

Senator Les Ihara spoke briefly on constitutional conventions and the Initiative Referendum. Next year on the general election ballot we will be asked to vote on whether Hawaii should hold another state constitutional convention. The last one was in 1978.

Scott Saiki, Speaker of the House and Vice Speaker Della Au Belatti gave a brief overview of the House representatives and stressed the group's diversity in years of service, age, and gender. Seventy five percent of current House members were not yet elected at the time of the initial rail funding.

Key issues for the coming session include: homelessness, housing, infrastructure, public employee salary increases, prison over-crowding, Maui Hospital conversion, unfunded liability and creating a stable economic environment.

Major bills approved and signed by the Governor from the 2017 regular session: HB 89 - \$70 million Medicaid to hospitals, HB 90 - \$14 million for nursing homes, HB 607 – a pilot Kupuna Care Caregiver Program providing up to \$70 per day for contract services for qualifying working caregivers, HB 615 - \$500K for a Healthy Aging Initiative, and HB 1396 – the so-called “Kawamoto Bill” that allows a non-Medicaid couple to qualify for a foster home placement.

Question & Answer Session:

The special session to address rail funding begins on August 28 and will last about a week. The Speaker stated that 60 days was not enough time to address rail and that there will be no additional staff cost. The only cost will be the per diem for Neighbor Island representatives.

The Health and the Human Services Committees will be combined in 2018 and chaired by Representative John Mizuno for one year. Q: Would a combined committee only be able to conduct half the number of hearings before the first lateral? A: We will still see the same level of digging in by the committee. The combined committee will have the same number of hearings as the former two committees. In the past, many bills were jointly referred to both, which shared the same membership. The new committee chair and members will have to “get up to speed” on both areas quickly and the Speaker was optimistic that they could function efficiently. He also emphasized that previous “victories” for seniors, such as unannounced inspections of care homes to begin in 2018, would be honored.

Kupuna Care Caregiver Program: Q: When can caregivers apply for funds? A: The Executive Office on Aging must first develop the program. Funds should be available next year (2018). Q: If services are not provided in 2017, how can legislators evaluate the program's success? Will funds be cut the following year if they cannot determine success? A: The Legislature has requested periodic reports and updates on the program as it goes forward.

Federal budget, Medicaid, and Department of Human Services budget: Concern: Any decrease in funding will affect all of our programs. The Vice Speaker stated that a working group of government agency representatives has been formed to monitor the status of the Affordable Care Act, federal funds, and the full impact a decrease in funds would have on the State. Senator Roz Baker will chair the committee. The group will convene shortly.

Oral testimony at hearings is not always permitted by committee chairs: Q: Why are there times when committee chairs allow one group (the opposition) to provide oral testimony but not those in favor of a bill? A: The Vice Speaker acknowledged that there may not be time to hear all testimony at a hearing. Chairs may defer decision-making to allow review of all testimony, even if some testimony has not been heard. The Speaker added there is a Senate rule that public testimony must be heard at the first hearing of a bill, but it is not required thereafter. The House does not have such a rule.

Licensing of condo property managers: The Speaker stated that advocates should request a resolution to have property managers licensed as a first step.

Timeline for Executive Office on Aging to report to Legislature: The Vice Chair confirmed there are timelines. She will follow up with new chairs on this issue.

Delays in release of funds for programs: Q: What can be done to tweak a law so funds can be released faster? The system is clogged. A: The Speaker stated the Governor is taking a conservative approach to releasing funds because the GET revenue is less than expected. There is a problem/delay with enforcement and collection of taxes. There is also a loss of revenue due to on-line sales, and because people are paying more for housing they are spending less, adding to the decrease in GET revenue.

Pros and cons of funding options for Rail: Rail is a City and County of Honolulu project. The City's cost is \$8.136 billion, excluding financing. There is a projected shortfall in revenue from the GET for rail. After 2024 revenue should exceed expenses. The Legislature would prefer using the Transient Accommodation Tax instead of extending the GET for rail or increasing property taxes. Q: What is the status of the 10 percent skim on GET for rail? A: There is a lawsuit challenging the skim. There is a discussion to lower it from 10 percent to 1 percent. They are awaiting a decision by the Hawaii Supreme Court. Q: Is there any interest in developing rail at street level? A: This would greatly delay the project. A new Environmental Impact Statement would be required, and such a shift would no doubt generate lawsuits that would delay it further. All delays would increase the cost.

Long-term care for people with disabilities: The number of people with disabilities is increasing and this will affect every person in Hawaii. Fifty percent of people over the age of 85 will have dementia. Every year the Legislature is asked for funding and nothing has been done. The Speaker acknowledged that everyone will have a family member or friend in need of long-term care services. It would be better for the Legislature to increase the GET for these services instead of for rail.



Kokua Council for Senior Citizens of Hawaii Education Fund, Inc.
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WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS

August 28 General Meeting: “Fighting back against injustice, the battle for condo owners' rights”

August 10 Kokua Council Windward: “Caregiver empowerment: Building Care Partnerships”

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



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

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

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