



WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS

Please join us for lunch  
MONDAY, March 23, 2009

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 Pizzas, Salad, Dessert by Eloise—\$5.00 Donation
- 11:45 Welcome, Introductions and Remarks, Larry Geller, President
- 12:00 **Program: Beth-Ann Kozlovich: “Fighting for Air.”** Kozlovich is HPR talk show’s executive producer and host of Town Square and Director of Development, American Lung Association of Hawaii.
- 12:30 Questions and Answers
- 12:45 Announcements
- 1:00 Adjourn

**Lunch Host: Phyllis Hiramatsu**

Board Meeting: 10:00 a.m. preceding lunch meeting

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**PRESIDENT’S LETTER**-*Larry Geller*

Kokua Council is concerned that in the competition for federal funds, our legislators not forget that frail and vulnerable elderly are still owed services previously cut by the governor’s office.

Lawmakers allocated funds to slash waiting lists for programs such as Kupuna Care, a statewide partnership between the state, the counties, and community agencies to assist Hawaii’s older adults to live independently and safely at home. If services such as household chores, home-delivered meals, personal care (assistance with bathing and toileting), and transportation are not available, people cannot be discharged from hospitals, or must be re-admitted when they can’t survive independently in their homes during their recovery.

The Legislature appropriated \$525,000 in 2007 and \$500,000 in 2008, but sadly the Governor has not released the funds for these basic services. Presumably she has other priorities for this money, since it’s hard to make a million dollars simply disappear. This diversion is at the expense of our elder citizens and their loved ones. By withholding these funds, not only has the governor increased suffering, but she has added to the expenses piled onto Hawaii’s already overburdened healthcare system which must hospitalize or institutionalize those who could remain in their homes at much lower expense.

Kokua Council asks that the Legislature pressure the governor not to hold Hawaii’s kupuna hostage any longer. The funds should be released without further delay.

Washington State has passed (November 2008) its own Death with Dignity law, known as the "Washington Initiative 1000" law...57.9% of the voters approved. It takes effect in July 2009. Similar to the Oregon law, i.e. allowing self-administration of a lethal dose of medicine, for competent, terminally ill, with 6 months or less to live. Requires 1 written, 2 oral requests from patients. Doctors can opt out. Does NOT require a mandatory psychiatric evaluation for depression or cognitive impairment.

### From 13,000 AARP Members Divided We Fail Survey

#### What do you perceive is the biggest problem in the health system?

- 74.1% Cost of health care
- 10.6% Difficulty finding health insurance due to pre-existing condition
- 9.2% Lack of emphasis on prevention
- 4.2% Quality of health care

#### HARA Meets the Senators—*Al Hamai, chair Hawaii Alliance of Retired Americans*

##### Senator Dan Inouye

"We had a good meeting with Senator Inouye, not only on the issues but also a lot of small talk. The Senator has a collection of Jewish memorabilia, including a Hanukkah Menorah, which we all enjoyed. He noted that his first wife was a teacher and a member of a union. On a wall he had the labor contract for his grandparents, which paid his granddad \$12 per month for 60 hours of work a week at a sugar plantation on Kauai, while grandma was paid \$7.50. He said that contract reminds him of his background. He said that his Dad helped to organize his sugar plantation workers, before the ILWU.

We expressed our concern with the high cost of prescription drugs and the need to reduce these cost by authorizing our government to negotiate to drug companies to reduce drug prices. He stated that with the new administration and Congress, things would hopefully change. We also discussed the need to keep Medicare solvent and the desirability to end the Medicare Advantage program. We also urged him to support legislation to give retired Americans age 55-64 the option to

join Medicare. He recalled that he was in the Congress when Medicare was enacted and he returned home to meet with the doctors and others who were opposed to Medicare because they thought it was "socialized medicine." He commented: we either are going to provide health care for all who need it or let them go without help as some countries had done. He recalled that Medicare when originally enacted was a simple basic program and not expensive. Now with many additions, it's a costly program."

##### Senator Dan Akaka

States across the country are confronted with budget shortfalls while our citizens have increasing health care and social service needs. ARRA (the stimulus package) establishes the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund and provides emergency Medicaid funding to ensure Americans can continue to rely on vital education and social safety net programs. Funding is also provided for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly Food Stamps), and childcare services.

Kapiolani Community College is offering an online continuing education course in gerontology beginning March 30, 2009. Students can learn at their own pace in a 6 module format but the course work must be completed in 8 weeks by May 22, 2009. If the course exams are passed at the 75% rate, students will receive a Certificate of Professional Development. Instructor is Dr. Mara Kent-Skruch, Ph.D. a gerontology professor of Anne Arundel Community College, Maryland who now lives in Hawaii.

#### On Campaign Reform, It's Good, It's Bad—*Common Cause*

Hawaii State House killed HB539, the bill that would have allowed unlimited corporate donations to political candidates. But this issue is not dead yet! The House Finance Committee reinserted language into a different bill, HB215, **to allow corporations to give huge sums to political action committees.** The proposed legislation will lift the existing \$1,000 cap on the total amount of money corporations can give to political action committees during each election. Corporations would be able to donate \$50,000 per cycle from their treasuries to political action committees—a step backwards.

## **Notes from February: "Planning for the Next Big One: Issues and Approaches to Community Resiliency"**

Our luncheon speaker Karl Kim, is Professor of Urban and Regional Planning and Director of the UH Program on Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance. He has received more than \$10 million in extramural research grants related to transportation, environmental management, urban planning and disaster management.

“The point I’m trying to make is that our society has known of these tremendous risks and threats to our communities across the planet yet we have not done enough to prevent the loss of lives and injuries and all the disruptions to our economies and communities. Planning for disaster is not enough.

“Hawaii is very different from the mainland. We can’t jump into our cars and drive away from an approaching storm. We need to develop more extensive shelter-in-place strategies.

“The challenge is not just to develop the best tools for predicting and managing disasters but also ensuring that those most vulnerable to these natural and technological disasters have access and knowledge and training and resources necessary to use these tools in order to save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce the loss of income, jobs, property and other necessities of life.”

Kim believes there should be more direct involvement of the community in the development of plans and strategies for preparedness, response and recovery. First responders are also families and neighbors and need to plan and communicate with each other.

He therefore asked the audience for suggestions. Some of the suggestions:

- The telephone book tsunami pages are not the same as the Federal guidelines and should be changed.
- Warnings, evacuation information and shelter sites are not communicated well.
- Plans for different kinds of help should be tailored to the needs of vulnerable people.
- Problems with condos were repeatedly mentioned with many condo managers and boards resisting making plans because of liability concerns.
- **A law is needed to demand condos plan for disasters.**

## **President Unveils New Budget, Slashes Medicare Advantage Overpayments**

President Obama released a proposed \$3.6 trillion budget designed to cut the federal deficit in half by the end of his first term, while investing heavily in renewable energy, education and comprehensive health care reform. The fiscal year 2010 budget establishes a \$634 billion “down payment” on expanding health coverage, paid in part by cutting the overpayments to insurance companies offering private Medicare Advantage plans and requiring these corporations to take part in a competitive bidding process. Currently, privatized Medicare Advantage plans cost between 12% and 19% more than traditional Medicare for the same services, draining the Medicare Trust Fund and forcing every senior to spend an additional \$3 in monthly premiums to cover the costs. Eliminating these taxpayer subsidies will save \$176 billion over the next ten years.

## **2009 National Family Caregiving Awards Program**

The National Alliance for Caregiving and MetLife Foundation are pleased to announce that applications are being accepted for the 2009 National Family Caregiving Awards Program. Now in its fourth year, this program is intended to improve the quality of life of family caregivers by recognizing and supporting the important work of community agencies and other organizations that support family caregivers as a significant part of their mission. On-line applications are now being accepted.

The deadline for applications is April 24, 2009. Please contact Kathleen Cameron at [kathleen56@caregiving.org](mailto:kathleen56@caregiving.org) with questions about the National Family Caregiving Awards Program.

The on-line application is available at [http://web.raffa.com/nac/caregiver\\_awards](http://web.raffa.com/nac/caregiver_awards).

## **Momentum Builds to Include Long-Term Services and Supports in Health Care Reform**

March marked the beginning of a critical effort to include long-term services and supports in health care reform legislation in Congress this year. National Council on Aging and other organizations participated in a national call-in day, urging their senators to include LTSS in the bill. Almost 5,000 calls were made.



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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**WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS**

**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 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. “

|                |   |                    |                                      |
|----------------|---|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
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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.

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|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| <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