



WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS

Please Join Us for Lunch!

Monday, May 23, 2005

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 Chicken, Rice, Salad, Drinks, Dessert by Eloise \$5.00 donation

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

11: 50 **Program: Behind the Scenes at the Legislature, report from our advocates and Plan Ahead: Issues for the Silver Legislature** including Christy Werner, Sex Abuse Treatment Center.

12:45 Announcements

1:00 Adjourn

BOARD MEETING: 10:00 A.M. PRECEDING LUNCH

PRESIDENTS' LETTER, What is Advocacy? Larry Geller

The 2005 legislative session is over and few problems have been solved. While many important bills have made it through the system, others have been derailed, often at the last minute, in conference committee or by powerful legislators. Some have been killed despite strong public support. Clean elections, affordable prescription drugs, pre-paid funeral reform, and other worthy bills failed to make it through this session.

Homelessness has been viewed as problem by state legislators but they did little to fix it. An onerous law that earned Hawaii a designation as one of the "meanest" states looks as though it will be repealed, but a weaker and still questionable law replaces it. What exactly has been done to assist the homeless? It's hard to understand why this problem is simply left for another year.

In fact, laws by themselves don't fix very much. They are a good beginning, but they can also lead to complacency: a belief that things are being taken care of. Something more than just passing laws and spending money is needed. So what to do? Experience has shown that what works is community involvement and participation. In a word, "advocacy." Our first task is not to change the system. We must understand that improvement won't be given to us simply as a "gift" by legislators or by anyone else.

What is advocacy? It is participating in a system that discourages our participation. It is learning to lead when we are not in charge. Without advocacy, government will not improve. Democracy is more than going out to vote every four years, it is all that happens in between.

If we want good government, good schools, good health care, or good anything, we will have to work at making these things happen. Oahu traffic is a great example of what happens when problems are simply left to go on and on without community involvement. Things don't get better by themselves.

Educator Ernest Boyer observed, "You cannot have an island of excellence in a sea of community indifference." So if we want a brighter future in any social area, it's up to us to work for it.

Can the community do it? Of course. No one else can. The community has capacities, talents, missions and callings that can be used to improve our lives in Hawaii. Advocacy requires learning, engagement and building on the knowledge of everyone. It can be learned and it can be very successful. Community advocacy is a very powerful force. Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed.

We have a voice, which is strong when we act together. And that's what we must do. There are consumer advocacy groups that need your support, Kokua Council, for example. Invest in your own future. Renew your membership, a ridiculously low \$5. Please consider an additional donation if you are able. We fight for you each year, all year.

CLEAN ELECTIONS BILL KILLED DURING THE LAST MOMENTS OF THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE Ira Rohter, Laure Dillon, Grace Furukawa, and Jessica Wisneski

On Friday night with eight of us there to witness, the Committee Chairs, Senator Colleen Hanabusa and Representative Blake Oshiro took about two minutes to conclude that there was not enough support in the House and they could not agree on a funding solution; lame excuses with the funding sitting there in the Hawaii Election Campaign Fund to run House races in 2006.

Money is NO excuse! The real reason for their killing our bill comes down to a lack of support from House members. Their feelings of not wanting to be "the guinea pigs" and the fear of "unintended consequences" stopped the passage of the comprehensive campaign finance reform that would bring elections back to the voters. Harness your frustration because we must turn any such feelings into positive energy and determination. The legislature has not seen the last of Clean Elections in Hawaii - it has only seen the tip of the iceberg. We have the months ahead to continue gaining the strength we need to come back even more fiercely next session. We must now direct our positive thoughts and energy toward the next 12 months and an election year in 2006.

The past six months have seen our original Clean Election citizen activist organization explode in size statewide.

We come away from this session with many positives:

- We have a core group of dedicated volunteers across the state and a large database of committed people willing to take action and all of your past actions were extremely effective.
- Our army of volunteers has continued to grow and has become politically very sophisticated and skilled.
- An office is set up and running and our small staff has become far more knowledgeable re the process and in quickly developing and then implementing wise political strategies.
- 2006 is an election year, and with another legislative session just before. In 2006 we have the ability to hold legislators accountable for their actions when they are the most vulnerable - at the ballot box!

So for now, sit tight, recharge, and await the formulation of an action plan that will begin as soon as this summer. Please join us in creating that plan by sending us your comments and by attending one of our future strategy sessions.

Lastly, thank you for your great effort. Thank you for your hard work and dedication throughout this past year. Thank you to all who somehow made it down to the capitol to witness, and to those who supported our effort in so many different ways. After a few days to decompress, we'll be picking dates for post-session parties on all islands with the many folks who have kept the campaign going and whom we know WILL NOT ACCEPT DEFEAT!

VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE: www.kokuacouncil.org

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES – HOW DID WE DO?

Not very well, thank you. However, all bills deferred or held are still alive and can be heard next session starting in the committee where they died. Of those that passed, the Governor can veto, sign into law or let become law without her signature. Below is the record.

Criminal History Checks, Deferred, will be brought up again next year.

Universal Health, PASSED. Establishes a taskforce to study the feasibility of establishing a universal healthcare system in Hawaii. See Letter to editor below.

Death With Dignity: Got one hearing, **held**.

Grandparents Rights for medical consent, PASSED finally!!

Affordable Housing: Passed. Long-term solutions. Incentives for builders of low cost housing through tax breaks and access to the Rental Housing Trust Fund, streamlines permitting process.

Homeless: PASSED. \$1.65 mil. for services, \$3 mil. for repairs and maintenance, \$1 mil. from rainy day fund for homeless services.

Long Term Care Insurance Tax Credits for employers & individuals. Dead.

Caregivers: Full-time caregiver coordinator. Dead, Resource Center, Dead

Rx Transparency – is dead. Pharmacy lobbyists win out again.

Clean Elections – was killed during the last moments of the Conference Committee.

Bridge to Hope: Now in U.H. budget.

2005 Model Legislature: Urges Kokua Council to convene a model legislature as an important opportunity for older adults to learn about the law-making process. **PASSED**

Letter to the Editor, *Renee Ing*

“It is a national disgrace that the United States, the richest nation on the face of the earth, should be the only advanced country where half it's people who go into bankruptcy do so because of a medical emergency.

Polls have shown that over 80% of the American public would like the United States to also have quality universal healthcare---the way all other modern, industrialized countries in the world do.

And in Hawaii, the 2005 Hawaii State Legislature debated House Bill 1304, which calls for a study of universal healthcare in other places and the feasibility of implementing a universal system here in Hawaii.

Congressman Jim McDermott (D-Washington), a longtime proponent of universal healthcare and national president of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), will be in Hawaii the first week of June.

ADA-Hawaii has invited Dr. McDermott to speak about the state of Universal Healthcare on **Saturday, June 4, 2005 from 9am-11: 30 am at The Lutheran Church of Honolulu, 1730 Punahou.** (Meeting Room on the corner of Poki and Dominis) You are cordially invited to come hear Dr. McDermott speak...And find out about what's been happening locally.”

What If?.....Tools to Help Seniors and Caregivers Prepare for Incapacity notes from *Katie Lambert, UHELP, the UH Law School Senior Law Program*

Hawaii's Uniform Health-Care Decisions Act took effect in 1999. The old “living will” although not necessarily invalid, had serious limitations and was difficult to execute. Advance Health-care directives now allows you to give instructions about your health care and to name somebody else to make health care decisions for you, including decisions to apply, continue, withhold or withdraw food and fluids. If you are not mentally incapacitated, you have the right to refuse or accept medical treatment. Add pages or changes to directive if you like.

Ask someone you trust to be your healthcare agent and discuss your wishes with this person. Select an alternate in case your agent is unable to serve. No lawyer is necessary. Have 2 qualified witnesses or a notary public witness your signature.

Inform family members, spouse, parents, children, siblings, friends and physicians that you have executed an advanced healthcare directive and that you expect them to honor your instructions. Give copies to all individuals who might be involved in caring for you. Review it periodically. (*Advance Directives will be available at luncheon meeting*)

"Don't worry about the world coming to an end today. It's already tomorrow in Australia." Charles Shultz

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. 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. "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. There is a \$5 annual membership to defer printing and postage costs. At each meeting, topical issues are presented for discussion and possible action.

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

President Larry Geller, 540-1928, lgeller@igc.org
Vice President Tony Lenzer, 261-2095, tlenzer@hawaii.rr.com
Vice President Laura Manis, 597-8838, manis@lava.net

Secretary Lyn Moku, 532-0806, lyn.moku@nmss.org
General Info Eloise Monsarrat, 839-1545
Program Lynda Johnson, 734-3648, lyndabfcj@aol.com
Newsletter Jeanne Y. Ohta, 373-3186, jyolta@hawaii.rr.com

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