



WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP OTHERS

Please join us for lunch

MONDAY, October 20, 2008

NOTE CHANGE OF DATE TO THIRD MONDAY

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. (extended session)

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, Drinks, Dessert by Eloise \$5.00 Donation

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

**12:00 Program: Kokua Council Sponsors its 5th ANNUAL COMMUNITY FORUM
BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION**

Round table discussion by key government administrators, legislators, community advocates followed by Q and A. CAMPAIGN REFORM, CAREGIVER SUPPORT, AFFORDABLE HOUSING PEDESTRIAN SAFETY, UNIVERSAL HEALTH, KUPUNA CARE, LONG TERM CARE

Representatives from nonprofit and other organizations involved with seniors as well as advocacy groups who have needs/concerns that can be helped legislatively or by other means will present their issues.

1:00 Adjourn

Lunch Host: Grace Furukawa

Board meeting: 10:00am Preceding Lunch.

Wall Street Chaos Showed Dangers of Social Security Privatization

This month's historic turmoil on Wall Street - massive drops in the stock market, the collapse of the giant Lehman Brothers firm, the acquisition of Merrill Lynch by Bank of America, and the government bailout of AIG Insurance - serves as yet another reminder of the dangers of privatizing Social Security. As advocated by **President Bush** and Senator John McCain, this would take money out of the Social Security Trust Fund and create private accounts tied to the roulette wheel of the stock market. "When you look at what is happening on Wall Street, is this really where you want to put your Social Security

savings. Workers who retired in 2002 would have lost 22% of their retirement savings under privatization plans being considered.

We use our email list for those who wish to receive this Newsletter by email, to notify members of action alerts in advocacy, for important meetings or briefings. Please send your email to Samcox@hawaii.rr.com

NOTES FROM SEPTEMBER LUNCHEON

“This was a really outstanding panel discussion....” T.J.Davies

Jim Shon: A “yes” vote in November for a Constitutional Convention, will require the legislature to decide: • How many delegates will there be and from how big a district. • What should they be paid to cover per diem, housing, airfare? How much can the delegate afford if there is no per diem? • Where will the convention be held, how much will that cost, can the public have easy access? • Should the delegates have an office and where? Same as where meetings are held? Cost? • When will the election of delegates be held- November or special election? When will the Con-Con be held? What kind of ballots, internet or mail in? What year? How to engage people to want to become delegates. • There must be research and public education prior to presenting recommendations to public for vote. Where? How? There are alternate models for a Con-Con: a Constitution Commission, the legislature can hold a mini con-con considering only 2-4 issues.

Ira Rohter: A Con-Con is an opportunity to decentralize power: home rule for counties, school districts, and housing. Now things can't be done quickly. More people would be involved in decisions that affect them. Would like to have 102 delegates for a people's convention that would be more participatory. Delegates should have reasonable salary, staff paid through public funding. Study groups should be organized immediately after the election and they should prepare white papers with plan A and plan B on how to carry out recommendations. Advise neighborhood workshops, town hall meetings for planning and candidate training. We need time to think through how we want government to be. How does it work? What do you want to change? The choice is to continue to complain or should we participate.

Peter Kay: The use of neighborhood boards and the internet are wonderful venues to disseminate information. It is a monster decentralized system, open to innovation because there is no regulation. His blog, hawaiiiconcon.org is now asking “Do you think it is time for our citizens to overhaul the government?” The most popular topic on his blog is education. If Neighborhood Boards had decision making powers, they could be used more to make changes. The Internet could be used to educate public about recommendations before a vote. Going to meetings physically takes at least two hours away from busy people. There would be more involvement of citizens in the con-con process by using the Internet to take polls on the issues being discussed. Rolling polls would mirror what's going on so delegates know what people are thinking. One caveat: Internet users don't necessarily show up at the polls.

Comments: There is not any discussion in the media that is mostly concerned with the economic crisis and the presidential election. Rail is most local issue. There is no paper version of the Hawaii State Constitution available. It can only be viewed and printed out from the internet-all 47 pages. Groups “against” a Con-Con will be more vocal. Issues that can be considered: appointed BOE, initiative/referendum, county home rule, OHA, state workers unions.

MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES OF HAWAII'S SOLDIERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

- One-third of soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan have mental health problems
- Suicide rates are at an all-time high among military
- Female soldiers face high rates of sexual assault and harassment in addition to the trauma of war
- Returning soldiers' mental health problems dramatically impact their families
- Reservists do not have the same level of support as others
- The system to care for soldiers' mental health is stretched to the breaking point

INSURANCE COMPANIES AGGRESSIVELY PUSH MEDICARE ADVANTAGE

Private insurance companies place three times as many ads - and spend twice as much money - to promote their Medicare Advantage plans than they do for stand-alone Medicare prescription drug plans, a new study by the Kaiser Family Foundation concluded. Moreover, the ads were three times more likely to mention the plans' extra benefits than to note that they may restrict beneficiaries' choice of physicians or providers. According to the report, the ads "tend to be skimpy on basic, descriptive information."

NURSING FACILITIES RATED

The Office of Inspector General report showed that 97.4 percent of Hawaii's nursing facilities were cited for violations and deficiencies last year, compared with 97.9 percent in 2006 and 100 percent in 2005. The survey, released Monday, looked at 190 possible deficiencies that fell in 16 categories, including resident rights, nursing and physician services, infection control and quality of life.

Hawaii and Arizona were tied for 12th in the nation at 97.4 percent, with Alaska, Idaho, Wyoming and the District of Columbia topping the list with 100 percent of their facilities being cited, according to the report.

The average number of deficiencies per Hawaii nursing facility was seven in 2007, unchanged from 2006 and down from the 8.5 reported in 2005. There are 50 nursing home facilities in Hawaii that receive Medicare or Medicaid reimbursements, according to the state Department of Health's Web site.

A spokesman for Medicare said the number of violations might be up because the agency is strengthening safety requirements and inspecting facilities more frequently.

In a separate report, a survey by the MetLife Mature Market Institute revealed that the cost for adult daycare services in Hawaii this year has averaged \$59 daily, compared with the national average of \$64 a day. The report showed that the hourly average wage for a home health aide here was \$23, compared with \$20 nationally, while a homemaker/companion cost about \$21, compared with \$18 nationwide.

A BABY BOOMER CAREGIVER'S PERSPECTIVE

Caregiving is a battleground, demanding discipline, commitment, patience, compassion, and selflessness – qualities that are hard for Baby Boomers in one respect. We perfected instant gratification, rebelled against boredom and bureaucracy, disdained authority, broke rules. Free love, sex and drugs brought freedom from stifling sacrifices that we saw our parents make, and vowed never to be trapped like that. Yet we rallied against war and injustice. Years later, we find ourselves battling a system that's flawed, anticipating an unprecedented, Age Boom, in crisis mode and with not enough personal savings or long term health plan insurance. The quality of life of our aging parents, others and ourselves is worth fighting for. And Baby Boomers have big mouths and will not accept less than the best.

Caregivers need tax breaks; we need more services and an easy way to find them. We need employers who understand. We need financial counseling and assistance during and after the journey, something that is just not in place yet. *Jody Mishan, Writer/Producer of Genius of Aging who says, "financial counseling and help during and after the caregiving has become my main focus for future advocacy".*

UPDATE ON MEDICARE BILL

From Sen. Daniel Akaka: "On July 15, 2008, I voted with a bipartisan majority of my colleagues in the Senate and House to override a veto by President George W. Bush and enact the bill into law (P.L. 110-275).

The Medicare bill, passed by Congress includes increased Medicare reimbursements for physicians, and protects access to health care for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and members of our armed services and their families. I am pleased that the bill also contains a provision to provide \$15 million in Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) resources to Hawaii hospitals. Medicaid DSH payments are designed to provide additional support to hospitals that treat large numbers of Medicaid and uninsured patients. **To utilize the federal funding, the Hawaii State Legislature must provide required**

matching funds. The provision provides \$2.5 million in the 4th quarter of 2008, \$10 million in 2009, and \$2.5 million for the 1st quarter of 2010.”

An Ernst & Young study of hospital finances last year found expenses exceeded patient revenues by \$150 million in 2006 and bad debt and charity care for the uninsured patients totaled \$143 million last year.



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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.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS	LIFE MEMBER	ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS	
___\$5.00	___\$100.00	___\$25.00	DONATIONS _____

Name _____ Phone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____