

I was in Washington D.C. from June 7th – 13th with the Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Council as members made their annual visit to our nation's capitol. This was the 24th year the Chamber has lobbied Washington on behalf of Hawaii's military presence and spending. With the military being the number two industry in our state behind tourism, it is imperative that we maintain strong ties and relationships with those in DC who are in charge of operations and expenditures. The visit was my first with the Chamber, and it was very informative as we met with top military commanders, federal civil servants, business leaders, and political appointees involved our nation's safety and security. As chairman of the Senate Public Safety and Military Affairs Committee, this trip provided me valuable knowledge and connections which will help me in my task as a state senator. I was very impressed with the line-up of government officials we met with who included but was not limited to outgoing Secretary of the Army Peter Geren, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Affairs Wallace "Chip" Gregson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army For Environment, Safety and Occupational Health Addison "Tad" Davis, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installation and Environment Wayne Army, Under Secretary of the Navy Robert O. Work, and Secretary of the Air Force Michael B. Donley.

One of the top priorities of our visit was to lobby on behalf of the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard. The shipyard is not only important in terms of repairs, maintenance, and military readiness, but it also is a major employer providing hundreds of jobs for our local residents. Investing dollars in our shipyard is necessary in our order to keep the yard modern and efficient since shipyards in other locations compete for the work. It's obvious that a shipyard at Pearl Harbor would cater to the ships stationed here, however, there is potential to work on non-military vessels as well, and this is an area where we can improve and do better. Our group met with Vice-Admiral Michael Vitale and Vice-Admiral Kevin McCoy who are in key positions in DC which oversee and affect the Pearl Harbor Shipyard.

Our meeting with David Brice, executive director of the Joint Guam Program Office, included an update of the Okinawa to Guam move which our US Marines will be implementing in the future. Over \$10 billion is currently expected to be spent for the move with funding coming from the Japanese government as well as the US. Infrastructure must be built and improved on Guam to accommodate the thousands of marines and their families who will be relocating there, and opportunities for Hawaii companies and workers will be available as this massive endeavor moves forward. With the economy being in the slump which it is in, the Guam initiative will certainly benefit our state.

A meeting with Senator Dan Akaka who chairs the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and a separate meeting with General Eric Shinseki, Secretary of Veteran Affairs, gave me an opportunity to lobby for a new Veteran's Health center or clinic at Kalaeloa, the former Barbers Pointe Naval Air Station. A new site is being considered on the Leeward Coast where many veterans live, and the old Barbers Point Health Clinic is available for use. Budgetary constraints may drive this decision.

A visit to the Homeland Security Department with Deputy Secretary Jane Lute focused on the complexities of the newest department in our federal government. An organizational chart shared by the department showed the multiplicity of the agencies and divisions which fall under its jurisdiction. Major areas included the Coast Guard, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Immigration Customs Enforcement, Transportation Security Administration, US Secret Service, Border Protection, and US Citizenship & Immigration Services. My desire to look at our harbor security and determine why large amounts of illegal aerial fireworks are being smuggled into Hawaii will be helped by this agency. I expect to conduct hearings into these matters this summer.

The need to conserve energy and develop alternatives to oil consumption led to a statement of federal government lands in Hawaii being considered for alternative energy projects which would be funded by the private sector. Public-private partnerships would be established with the federal government providing the land and private businesses financing the operations. Our military bases would then purchase the alternative energy for their grid, thus relying less on fossil fueled energy. More on this project is forthcoming. Kaneohe Marine Corp Air Station has been a leader in greening its operations, and all military bases have been tasked to utilize alternative energy where feasible.

Makua Valley and the training needs of our Army, support for our military families, National Guard needs, aviation needs, North Korea and many other issues were discussed on this very productive visit which was both educational and fascinating for me. I believe our military is in great hands, and the leadership in Washington DC with whom our group met with are intelligent, outstanding men and women more than capable and willing to protect our state and our nation.