

LEGISLATIVE CONNECTION

March 24, 2008

NEEDLES ON THE BEACH

Ewa's shorelines were dotted with unused blood-drawing needles last week, which presented a public health hazard. I was notified of the incident by a constituent, although the State Department of Health had known about it for about a week. Several buckets of needles were collected for over three days, and more continued to wash ashore for at least a week. Hau Bush Park, where many needles were found, is frequented by surfers and fisherman. Knowing of the needles would certainly minimize any public health risk the needles may have posed.

If buckets of needles are washing ashore on public beaches, the general public must be told. At the very least, the public would be cautious and attentive if they knew the possible risk involved, even avoiding the area until an all clear notification was given.

The media reported the situation after residents took action. The State Department of Health apparently does not have a policy to notify the media and Public if needles or syringes wash ashore. I find both this and their decision to stay quiet a poor decision. I informed the Director that a policy of immediate public notification needs to be adopted. I have faith the Department will respond differently if this occurs in the future.

IROQUOIS POINT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

After several meetings and much discussion, postcard pretty Iroquois Point will be open to the public April 15. Hunt Development of Hawaii, the leaseholder of the Navy land, will make it available to non-residents of Iroquois Point between sunrise to sunset. The beach can be used for water activities such as fishing, kayaking, surfing, as well as swimming. The public will be allowed to use the restrooms but not the private amenities such as beach chairs and cabanas. No lifeguards will be provided, so use of the beach is at the user's own risk.

These last five years, the beaches of Iroquois Point have only been open to residents of the 1,461-home subdivision, due to security concerns of both the Navy and those living in the subdivision. Visitors will need to obtain a free one-day pass at the front gate. There will be 23 public parking stalls; the rest are for use of the subdivision residents.

KEONE'ULA BOUNDARIES

Last week Ewa residents met to hear and give input on the Department of Education's plans to redistrict students between Ewa Beach and Keone'ula Elementary Schools. Many homeowners felt that they had been let down, believing that their children were entitled to attend the newly opened Keone'ula Elementary School. Others were concerned about the safety and additional traffic that would result by having children bussed to Ewa Beach Elementary School a mile away, rather than simply walking to the school closer to home.

The burgeoned school enrollment was unexpected when Keone'ula was designed and constructed. Redistricting is necessary to ensure that students are educated under proper student-teacher ratios, and that there are enough classrooms to accommodate the student population.

I have asked the Department of Education to make sure that homeowner concerns are appropriately considered when finalizing the redistricting. The most pressing need is to keep all siblings at the same school. I have also asked that the borders be drawn to include more Ocean Point homes in the Keone'ula district, since the school was originally constructed to accommodate students from this subdivision. I was recently informed three new portables will be erected at Keone'ula for the new school year beginning July 2008.

UH WEST OAHU PROGRESS UPDATE

The Planning Commission recently approved the zone change request for the UHWO campus by unanimous vote. Mahalo to all who wrote testimony supporting the request. The Commissioners were impressed by the sheer numbers of concerned individuals and groups who took the time to support the UHWO's 500-acre zoning plan. There is still much more to do to complete the preliminary work for construction of the UHWO campus. This milestone is a moment to savor in the lengthy process of land use planning. The next step is approval by the Honolulu City Council. Chancellor Gene Awakuni sends his big mahalo for your support and efforts in this matter.