

## HAWAIIAN AIR GOES TO MANILA

In a time when Aloha Airlines shut down, ATA announced its impending route closure, go! Airlines considered bankruptcy, and Delta and Northwest announced their merger, Hawaiian Airlines' first venture into Asia marked a courageous and historic moment in the local airline industry. With the high volume of family visitations between Hawaii and the Philippines, flights to Manila are a natural choice for a destination in Asia. Kudos to Hawaiian Airlines for making this move to expand its territory to better serve Hawaii residents and visitors from abroad.

Over 200 community leaders, businesspersons, media representatives, and government officials were guests of Hawaiian Airlines to promote Hawaii and the new Hawaii-Manila route. In Manila, we met with our Filipino counterparts in industry and government to establish contacts across the miles that we hope will foster increased economic opportunities and goodwill.

In my brief two-day stay, I met many individuals who could help facilitate business and community relations between our two countries. It was a successful introduction to many of the key persons who can take advantage of this new direct flight to bring increased business and cultural opportunities here to Hawaii.

## DOWN TO THE WIRE

We are now in the final days of the 2008 Legislative Session. This segment is called "conference." Bills go to conference committee if the versions passed by the House and Senate differ. Conference committee members discuss and negotiate finalize the terms and language of the final version that will go back for approval in each chamber. These are some of the bills that are in conference.

Self sufficiency is good for Hawaii. It reduces our vulnerability to the direct and ripple effects of the ever increasing price of oil in a market of high global demand. It diversifies the economy to buffer us against downturns in any particular sector. With Hawaii currently importing 80% of its food and over 90% of its fuel, reducing our reliance on imports as much as possible and being self-sustaining is a goal toward which we need to work. Generating local electricity through use of alternative energy sources, and decreasing landfill through extensive recycling not just of household consumables but also of demolished buildings and wastewater, are just two of the avenues we can take toward self-sufficiency. **HB257, Land Use** promotes this goal by

giving an expedited permit process to developers who plan to build according to the sustainability criteria listed.

The dual problems of a severe teacher shortage and rampant turnover has plagued the DOE for the past decade. Each year the DOE hires about 1,600 new teachers to fill vacant positions, but about 1/3 of those new hires leave after only three years and nearly 1/2 leave within five years. The stringent certification and training requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act contribute to the teacher recruitment and retention dilemma. This turnover and shortage double whammy costs the DOE about \$4 million each year.

**SB3252, Teachers** will try to improve teacher retention through extensive support for certification and professional development, as well as a teacher cadet program, a teacher induction program, and housing assistance.

Silicon Valley, Boston's Route 128, Austin, North Carolina's Research Triangle, San Diego, Salt Lake City, Seattle, and Boulder have all developed strong technology-based businesses with the assistance of venture capital, derived in large part through employee pension funds. Hawaii's Employees' Retirement System (ERS) has committed \$300 million to the category that includes venture capital, but has not yet invested any in Hawaii. **HB 338, Innovation Economy** encourages the ERS to allocate funds in this area, and to ramp up the commercialization of technological discoveries and advances made by University of Hawaii researchers through partnerships among the UH, the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, and the private sector.

Taiwan is the U.S.'s ninth largest trading partner, 11<sup>th</sup> largest export market, and fifth largest farm products market. In 2006, U.S. investment in Taiwan was \$15 billion, and trade between the U.S. and Taiwan totaled \$61.2 billion. Thirty-five other state legislatures have passed resolutions to support a free trade agreement between the U.S. and Taiwan. **SCR53** requests **the President of the United States to enter into a free trade agreement with Taiwan.**

Decreasing the costs of prescription drugs is important for Hawaii's elderly, disabled, underinsured, uninsured, and low-income residents. **HB 1359** creates the **State Pharmacy Assistance Program**, a merger of the Hawaii RxPlus Program and Medicare Part D benefit. The new program would have the authority to participate in joint prescription drug purchasing agreements and other cost-reduction measures. Alternatively, **HB7** directs the Governor to participate in the **I-SaveRx Prescription Drug Program** by January 1, 2009, to give Hawaii residents access to affordable medicine. Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Kansas, and Vermont are already program participants. Pharmaceutical companies in Europe and Canada provide the medications in this program at about 25-50% less than currently available.

**HB2326 Real Property, Mortgage Foreclosure** would protect homeowners who are under financial distress due to foreclosures, liens, or

encumbrances. Solicitors claiming to be able to stop, prevent, or delay these legal actions often use the consumers' desperation to obtain an unfair advantage and withhold or misrepresent vital information and details, even going so far as to convince consumers to transfer their property to these unscrupulous entities. The bill compels these solicitors to fully and completely describe their services in written contracts and gives homeowners the right to cancel at any time before the entity performs all the contracted services.