



September 2007  
Legislative Update

## SENATOR WILL ESPERO & YOUR LEGISLATURE WORKING FOR YOU

### **NEW HONOLULU AIRPORT PARKING LOT**

Several legislators were on hand for the September 18 groundbreaking of the new Honolulu Airport parking lot. The 1,800-stall structure will be built on the open lot between the Inter-island and Overseas Terminals, and is scheduled to open in December 2008. The \$16.2 million parking lot is part of a \$2.3 billion, 12-year state airports modernization plan.

### **PUBLIC SAFETY OVERSIGHT**

The Legislative Public Safety Oversight Committee is visiting Hawaii's correctional facilities and learning about the conditions and resources at each, to better inform us to construct policies that take care of problems and help the corrections system succeed. We have toured all of the neighbor island facilities and heard from their respective communities about their problems, successes, and wish lists.

#### **Big Island**

On September 27, the Committee toured the three correctional facilities on the Big Island, our last neighbor island stop, and held two community information and input meetings.

Kulani Correctional Facility houses our sexual offenders. It is located in an isolated, beautiful mountain setting, and would be ideal for expansion, however, the major problem with expansion would be infrastructure costs. Hale Nani, also near Hilo, is a minimum/medium security facility which houses men and women. I was surprised the location had no physical facilities for programs to rehabilitate our inmates, although I was happy to hear a new building which the Legislature funded will begin construction this fall.

Hilo Jail houses pre-trial offenders and sentenced inmates. Inmates are housed here for a short term, and if found guilty, are eventually sent to prison. This site could be expanded to accommodate another 125 prisoners, however, this is not a high priority at this time. The Kona side of the Big Island lacks facilities for incarcerated individuals, and this is an issue which must be considered. The Judiciary wants to build a complex in Kona, and the possibility of a pre-trial jail near a new courthouse complex is one option. Costs will likely drive this decision.

The Going Home Committee, a group of 70 stakeholders, has met for about three years discussing re-entry and rehabilitation issues on the Big Island. Members attended two hearings we held on the Big Island to discuss and listen to concerns and comments from the public. Both hearings were held in Hilo. The first one included a video-teleconference to enable residents from Waimea and Kona to participate.

## **Kauai**

On August 24, the Legislative Oversight Committee on Prisons visited the Kauai Community Correctional Center (KCCC). The small prison of 125 inmates looked less like a jail and more like a cluster of buildings for a summer camp or retreat. Very little barb-wire was visible although it was not totally barb-wire free. Set in a rural area across from a golf course, KCCC is surrounded by acres of land farmed by the prisoners.

Several individuals from the Kauai Planning Action Alliance, a group of organizations and public safety staff that supports rehabilitation efforts on Kauai, testified. Among them: Rebekah Reid of Community Integration Partnership which provides transitional housing for about 50 inmates and their families; Tali McCall, of the Salvation Army's substance abuse program for inmates and ex-offenders; and Al Sison of Mental Health Kokua, which assists individuals with mental health problems. A couple ex-offenders commended Warden Wagatsuma's Lifetime Stand program for holding them accountable and helping them take responsibility for turning their lives around.

With a small inmate population to manage, the problems common in bigger facilities did not at all seem overwhelming. Warden Neal Wagatsuma appeared to have the facility operating relatively smoothly. His Lifetime Stand program -- a disciplined, behavioral co-ed setting where inmates are trained to see the bigger picture and understand the consequences of their actions -- was encouraging. Program directors and former inmates testified that Warden Wagatsuma was a man ahead of his time when dealing with re-entry and rehabilitation programs. I was pleased that this Kauai facility had a re-integration program that has had some success. A residential drug treatment program was cited as the next need for Kauai inmates and ex-offenders.

## **PLANNING FOR TRANSPORTATION**

A crowd of about 100 people listened to Mayor Mufi Hannemann's message of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) on September 25 at Waipahu Intermediate School. Based on the principle that convenience enhances lifestyle and satisfaction with life, TOD is an urban planning concept borrowed from Europe and now gaining support among U.S. cities. In TOD, businesses and homes are situated with ease of transport in mind. People can walk from home to schools, shopping centers and services, and can walk to bus or rail stations to go elsewhere. For

individuals, this maximizes quality of life time by minimizing driving time, and for communities, translates to less congestion on the highways and cleaner air.

Transit oriented development is the first step that will affect communities along the future rail line routes. The tenor of the room was optimistic as Mayor Hannemann shared many ideas about the forms this planning design could take on Oahu. Residents left the meeting concerned yet excited about the future opportunities that rail and TOD will bring.

### **DON'T SINK THE SUPERFERRY!**

Ferry services in other island clusters, such as the Seattle or Vancouver areas, are vital in opening up economic opportunities to residents. With the ferry, residents of Puget Sound island towns can enjoy the spectacular scenery and close-knit communities they reside in, without sacrificing access to the multitude of job opportunities in nearby Seattle.

Workers can wake up in their lovely rural towns, drive onto the boat, ride across the water to Seattle, disembark, drive their own cars to work in the city, put in a full day's work, and return back to the island where they want to live. Because of the ferry, they do not have to decide what to sacrifice – the community they want to live in or the job they want to have.

A ferry also provides another transportation alternative for our state. In the event of an airline strike, other airline problems, an emergency, or natural disaster, the Superferry can be a valuable asset to us all.

The long awaited launch date for the inter-island service has been plagued with physical obstruction and legal entanglements. Senator Robert Bunda and I asked Senate President Colleen Hanabusa to convene a Special Session to handle the dilemma while issues are worked out in the judicial system. We would hope our colleagues would permit the Superferry to operate while the environmental concerns are addressed. I am confident that the Superferry would satisfactorily respond to points raised by its opponents.

An enormous amount of time and money has been invested in bringing the Superferry to Hawaii and getting all the details in place for it to operate. Many residents are in favor of the Superferry's operation in Hawaii, despite what I believe is the vocal minority we are now seeing. I believe that most legislators, including myself, want to help the Superferry fulfill its financial obligations and not get sunk.

### **BROADBAND MEETING**

The initial meeting of the Broadband Task Force will be on October 3, 2007. This year's Legislature felt that Hawaii needed to support and stimulate investment in Broadband and remove barriers to its development and availability. We hope that doing so will enable Hawaii's residents and businesses to be on par with the advances that this technology can bring. Japan, for example, will be using Broadband to make pathology services available to rural clinics and to double its telecommuting workforce. The Task Force will examine the actions needed to improve Broadband quality, accessibility, and affordability for Hawaii residents.

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