



Vol. 4

## SENATOR WILL ESPERO & YOUR LEGISLATURE WORKING FOR YOU

Crossover - midpoint in the 2007 Legislative Session, where bills introduced, heard and passed in each chamber get sent over to the other side. Here's a few of the very important issues that my colleagues and I in the Hawaii State Senate last week sent over to the House of Representatives.

### The Leading Cause of Death...

... injury related death in Hawaii is suicide--one death every three days. More die from suicide than from motor vehicle accidents. 1,400 attempted suicides are serious enough to need medical treatment. Youth suicide rates are rising for both sexes and among all ethnic groups. Males are more likely than females to commit suicide. Native Hawaiian youth, among all ethnic groups, are more likely to attempt suicide.

Hawaii's youth have contemplated suicide more than youth in any other state, according to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Each year over 4000 young Americans take their lives, making suicide the 2d leading cause of death among persons aged 15 to 24 years old, and the 7<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death across the country. Intervention and prevention is now a national health priority, with Congress in 2004 appropriating \$82 million over three years for state youth suicide prevention programs.

**S.B. 979 creates a statewide youth suicide early intervention and prevention program in the Department of Health**, with primary focus on persons aged 10 - 24. The DOH would oversee youth suicide early intervention and prevention programs; conduct suicide prevention training for law enforcement, health care providers, school and UH employees and other persons who have contact with at-risk individuals; build community networks, and create public awareness for youth suicide prevention. *S.B. 979, Relating to Suicide Prevention.*

### In Case of Hurricane and Other Disasters

Does your home have a safe room where you and your family can ride out a hurricane? In 2005, the Legislature directed the state Department of Defense to formulate public shelter and residential safe room design criteria. These are now in place. **S.B. 1426 makes safe rooms eligible for grants to help home owners to construct these protective areas.** Grants are currently available for installing: uplifting restraint ties at roof ridges and roof framing to wall or beam supports; additional fastening of roof sheathing and roof decking for high wind uplift; impact and

pressure resistant exterior opening protective devices; and wall to foundation uplift restraint connections strengthening for wood foundation posts on footings.

**S.B. 1402 re-appropriates \$2 million of loss mitigation grant funds to make homes wind resistant and wind safe.** Further, **S.B. 795 requires the creation of a statewide building code to ensure safety and health considerations and emergency / disaster preparedness.** *S.B. 1426, Relating to the Loss Mitigation Grant Program; S.B. 1402, Relating to the Loss Mitigation Grant Fund; S.B. 795, Relating to Building Codes.*

**S.B. 1962 will give condominium owner-occupants a tax deduction for installation of an automatic fire sprinkler system.** The deduction is limited to owner-occupants for new installation of an automatic fire sprinkler system that serves an entire residential or mixed use condominium that was constructed before December 31, 1975. *S.B. 1962, Relating to Taxation.*

### **Encouraging the Entertainment Industry**

The video game industry alone is now \$25 billion strong. With technology allowing companies to grow where people want to live, **S.B. 1920 continues Hawaii's promotion of this industry to diversify and strengthen the state economy.** The entertainment industry provides jobs and revenue in a variety of ways, from cast and crew to catering, housing and others, as well as promoting Hawaii to the outside world.

The bill raises income tax credits for motion picture, digital media and film production ventures, from 15% to 20% for Oahu, and 20% to 25% for neighbor island productions. Tax credits for productions in more than one county will be prorated according to the amounts spent in each county. The bill repeals the Hawaii Television & Film Development Board, and transfers its responsibilities to the Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism.

Other industry-encouraging state tax incentives include Investment tax credits that carryover for four years, and the tax-free receipt of royalties earned on computer-assisted audio / video / audio-video files, computer animation, or other entertainment products, or commercial television and film products. *S.B. 1920, Relating to Taxation.*

### **A License to Fight**

Mixed martial arts is increasing in Hawaii, in the number of contestants, spectators and unregulated contests. MMA fighters can get seriously hurt in these heavy contact events. To protect the warriors, the crowd and the general public, **S.B. 1712 will institute regulation for mixed martial arts contests.** The bill requires at least two licensed physicians to be there at each MMA contest; sets limits on the number and duration of rounds in each contest; and requires all persons involved to be licensed and subject to penalties for violations, including revocation or suspension of a license. *S.B. 1712, Relating to Mixed Martial Arts.*

### **And Finally, a Food Tax Credit**

**S.B. 1882 will give residents a food tax credit** on individual income tax returns. The amount of the credit will be decided later. *S.B. 1882, Relating to Taxation.*

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