



Vol. 7

SENATOR WILL ESPERO & YOUR LEGISLATURE WORKING FOR YOU

RECOGNITION TIME

One of the nicest things we do as legislators is to recognize people for their accomplishments. We congratulated three groups and one individual last week: the Hawaii Association of the Blind, James Campbell High School Girls Soccer Teams, and baseball legend Derek Tatsuno.

The **Hawaii Association of the Blind** (HAB) celebrated its 40th anniversary in March. We commended three individuals for their work with HAB: founder and current president Warren Toyama, First Vice President Filo Tu, and Board Member Miles Tamashiro. The HAB eliminated major obstacles for the blind by changing laws and public policy. The HAB won passage of the Hawaii White Cane Law, securing civil service employment rights and the right to travel freely with a cane or guide dog. It got the Civil Rights for the Handicapped law passed, paralleling race and sex anti-discrimination laws. It pushed through reforms eliminating discrimination in the issuance of life insurance policies and in adopting children. In addition, the HAB consults and advises on policy issues, and provides speakers and information booths at community meetings and events.

Go Sabers! The James Campbell High School Girls Varsity and Junior Varsity Soccer teams scored victories in this unforgettable season. The Varsity team put JCHS in the spotlight when it placed third in the national finals. Both the JV and Varsity won their respective state OIA and regional division championships. All of the girls practiced long and hard, honing their individual and team skills to capture the top spots here and on the mainland.

Derek Tatsuno – his name says it all. As my Senate colleague David Ige remarked when he fondly recounted playing in Little League against the baseball legend, he was one of "hundreds, maybe thousands who struck out and bit the dust" on the receiving end of a Derek Tatsuno pitch. The Senate recognized Tatsuno for recently being inducted into the National College Baseball Hall of Fame.

Later this month we will honor the James Campbell High School team who won the Overall Grand Prize in the annual statewide public school **Island Movie** contest. Seniors Waianae Kahananui, Trankie Hagos and Desiree Agngarayngay won with their video "Reality Under the Smile." The film drew tears from judges and audiences alike, depicting Waianae's story of breaking through the tragedy of family and environment to become JCHS student body president. Media advisor and social studies teacher Oscar Ramiscal, who oversaw the project, will also be recognized.

And now to the bills.

All four bills passed the Senate with amendments, and now go to Conference Committee. In Conference Committee, the chairs of the respective House and Senate subject matter committees will agreed on the final language of the bill before it becomes a law.

HEY BUDDY, CAN YOU HELP ME PAY THIS BILL?

Group health rates for self employed individuals – that's help small businesses can use. **S.B. 1479 requires all group health insurers to offer group plans for the self employed who live, work or reside in the service area.** The bill covers sole proprietorships or any legally recognized entity through which a person may operate her own business, with a general excise tax license for that business. Group health insurers may limit enrollment periods to a minimum thirty calendar days of a qualifying event. "Qualifying event" can mean the date a general excise tax license is issued, loss of a job, a reduction in hours of work, or the expiration of COBRA benefits. Insurers may impose a one year waiting period for self-employed persons who terminate coverage. *H.B. 1479, Relating to Health Insurance Support for Small Businesses.*

DEL MONTE FRESH PRODUCE

Del Monte workers and retirees who are displaced or affected by the closure of the pineapple fields may be in danger of losing their homes. **H.B. 835 establishes a housing assistance fund to help these workers hold on to their housing.** Assistance from this housing fund will be for mortgage or rental payments. *H.B. 835, Relating to Housing.*

IDENTITY THEFT

Stop! Thief! **H.B. 1612 allows a victim of identity theft to place a security freeze on her consumer credit report.** The individual must make a written request by certified mail to the consumer credit reporting agency at the designated address, and should include a valid copy of a police report, investigative report or complaint filed with a law enforcement agency. Without the copy of the report or complaint, the consumer credit agency may charge up to \$10 for placing a security freeze on the credit report. *H.B. 1612, Relating to Consumer Credit Reporting Agencies.*

NURSES CARE FOR YOU

H.B. 71 strengthens certification requirements of nurse aides to ensure the quality of care rendered to patients. Applicants for "certified nurse aide" designation must successfully complete a state approved training program and a nurse aide examination. Nurse aides who work in Medicare or Medicaid facilities must meet both federal and state requirements. Recertification for nurse aides will be on a biennial basis, including annual performance review and in-service training. Training programs must meet all applicable federal and state requirements.

(You can reach my office by telephone at 586-6360, fax at 586-6361, or e-mail at senespero@capitol.hawaii.gov. I represent Ewa through lower Waipahu.)