

# Planet Downtown

## Politics Q&A

**J. Kalani  
English**



*Sen. Kalani English represents the districts of Molokai, Lanai, Kaholaawe, Kalaupapa and upcounty Maui. But as chairman of the Committee on Energy and the Environment, his leadership also affects thousands of workers and dwellers in downtown Honolulu. This is what he told the Planet last week.*

**What's the status of SB 3116? (A bill that creates higher standards for the discharge of cruise-ship waste.)**

It's stuck in the House. It could move out. I constructed it in such a way that if the industry objected to the bill, they're objecting to federal laws, laws that are already in existence. I brought everything into harmony with the Clean Water Drinking Act, the Federal Pollution Control Act. It begs the question: if you don't want the bill to move because it's requiring you

to comply with federal laws that you're required to comply with, what's the problem?

We worked closely with the Environmental Protection Agency to construct the bill, and they were excited about it. What the federal government advised us to do was to empower our Department of Health to enforce the federal law, so that's what we did. I think that's where the industry objected. Currently, the feds will inspect, if we're lucky, once every three years. If we authorize our Health Department, we would ask them for quarterly inspections. Again, the trust to verify principals. I think the industry got a bit frightened by that, because, you know, maybe they're not meeting the standards.

**What environmental-friendly technologies could the cruise industry implement?**

What the industry is working on and developing now is wastewater treatment systems that will make water so pure, that it's higher than the drinking water standards that we have. Frankly, I believe it. I've seen the technology, and they have put a lot of effort, money and time into developing it. The problem is the implementation of that technology. I'd rather take a precautionary approach. In other words, if all is equal, I'd rather err on the side of caution. That's why I've been an advocate of the review processes of improving the technology on the cruise ships.

The industry in Hawaii has been very cooperative and very open about wanting to move the technology forward. The problem is they've had problems in other parts of the world, and if they implement the technology here, they'll be forced to implement it elsewhere. I'm not sure, but I think that's part of their thinking.

**What are your challenges of regulating the cruise ship industry?**

The issue is one of balance and fairness. The cruise ships operate in Hawaii under a memorandum of understanding. It's constructed in such a way as to take the place of laws. What I object to is, it screwed up the entire legislative process. It doesn't create the penalties needed for compliance or the review mechanisms. The other part of it is that at any point in time, any party can pull out in 90 days notice. If a major violation occurs, they can pull out. I think we deserved

more. Hawaii deserves more. It will be a multibillion dollar industry for Hawaii, and I want to make sure the industry is supported as best as it can. But I want to make sure that the industry does not hurt the environment.

**What other environment-related bills affect people who live and work on downtown Honolulu?**

There's a seawater air conditioning bill that I introduced, which will provide air conditioning in the downtown area, using deep, sea cold saltwater, bringing it up to pipelines and using that for condensation for air conditioning. It could save millions of dollars for downtown businesses in electric costs. It'll help us reduce our dependency on fossil fuels and meet renewable standards, in other words, the amount of power that you can consume, bring that down.

**That's the technology used at NELHA (Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawaii) on the Big Island, right?**

That technology was developed in Hawaii. It sort of stopped in its development stage and went to other parts of the world, so now we're bringing it back in its refined form. The land area will be small; they'll need to bring the pipes up. But the economic benefits will be great for businesses. It will cut a good percentage of bills will drop. The downside is, there will be construction. The upside is it's very possible.

**The status of the bill, as we speak?**

It passed the Ways and Means Committee and is going to the House.

**Funding?**

We're looking at a special purpose-revenue bond. It's not a government bond. It's government-authorized, but it's a private bond. **DE**

*"The overriding thing is clean oceans, clean water, clean land, clean air. As long as we can keep those elements, then all the other economic activities will be fine."*

**Sen. J. Kalani English,  
chair, Committee on  
Energy and the  
Environment**