



Submitting Testimony: Making Sure Your Voice is Heard at the Legislature



Teachers from Moloka'i share their concerns with Senator English at his State Capitol Office. For 6th District residents who cannot travel to O'ahu and want to register their opinions about bills under consideration at the Legislature, a number of options are available.

The 2005 Legislative Session is now almost half over. Almost daily at the State Capitol, citizens testify at public hearings on individual bills as they are examined, refined, and moved toward passage. In order to make informed decisions, lawmakers rely on public testimony to make them aware of relevant information, individual concerns, and the impacts new laws can have on communities throughout the state.

It's a challenge that's unique to our islands: how does State government provide equal access for Neighbor Island citizens when the center of government is on O'ahu? Senator J. Kalani English's 6th District, which includes Hāna, East and Upcountry Maui, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, and Kaho'olawe, is one of the most rural districts in Hawaii; do its residents have an equal opportunity to make their voices heard at the Legislature?

They do; there are a number of mechanisms in place to level the playing field for people who cannot appear at the State Capitol in person – but it's important for 6th District residents to be aware of the resources available to them. Toll-free telephone calls, World Wide Web access, faxes, and letters all can be used to track progress of bills, learn about public hearing schedules, and submit testimony.

The Internet is an excellent place to start. People who don't have personal computers at home can use terminals at Public Library branches to go online and track the day-to-day progress of events.

Suppose, for example, you have read in the newspaper about a bill to regulate cruise ship discharges and want to know more. The gateway Web address is <http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/>. Go to the "Search" option on that page; enter the words "cruise ship" in the "bill and resolution text" option, and you will be directed to a list of House and Senate measures, along with a brief description of each.

Chair, Committee on Energy,
Environment,
and International Affairs
Committee Memberships:
Intergovernmental Affairs;
Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs;
Media, Arts, Science, and Technology;
Water, Land, and Agriculture;
Ways and Means



A Message From Kalani

Ours is a unique legislative district, whose diverse communities, on three different islands, face a special challenge: making sure they have an equal voice with the citizens of more heavily populated communities who can bring their concerns directly to our offices and hearing rooms at the State Capitol.

In this issue of our newsletter, we outline ways the people of the 6th District can keep in touch with us about the legislation that matters to them. We want you to know how to make the most effective (and timely) presentation of your views. Between now and the April 8 Second Decking deadline of this year's session, your testimony is especially valuable. We hope you'll take advantage of every opportunity to get in touch.

Aloha, *J. Kalani English*





Energy, Environment, and International Affairs Chair Sen. English, with Co-Chair Sen. Russell Kokobun at his right, listen to testimony on SB15, a measure that prohibits addition of chemicals to public water supply, at a recent hearing. Information is gathered at such hearings both through oral and written testimony.

You can check the specific language of the bills, find out which committee will be hearing them next, and learn what amendments may have been introduced.

Once you know the language and current status of a bill, you may want to submit testimony. Clicking on **Legislative Information** from the homepage leads to the **Citizen's Guide**, which features a useful step-by-step outline of the format for written testimony.

Bill Status and Documents will allow you to check the schedule for public hearings. It's important to keep track of the dates and times of committee hearings and submit testimony far enough in advance for your views to be given full consideration.

The Public Access Room: a Key Resource for Citizen Input

The Legislature's Public Access Room and its hard-working staff can be a valuable resource, especially for those who are dealing with the Legislature for the first time. They can help you navigate your way through the intricacies of life at the Capitol and make sure you find the information you need.

And they can do that no matter where in Hawai'i you may live. Residents of the 6th District can call Public Access Room staffers toll-free at any time during regular business hours and find PAR Coordinator Suzanne Marinelli and her four-person staff ready to help – with the expertise at hand to help you sort out the fast-paced actions of the Legislature during each year's intensive 60-day session.

For many, the help they need is readily available online, so Room 401 at the Capitol has a set of computer terminals for walk-in visitors. Television monitors play in-house broadcasts of hearings in progress. Neighbor Island callers to the PAR's 800 numbers can ask staffers to check such things as hearing notices, the current status of bills under consideration, and the way each legislator voted on any given measure.

If you would like to share your feelings about any bill under consideration, a call, a fax, or an e-mail to the Public Access Room will tell you how and when to submit your testimony, and – best of all – PAR staffers will print the right amount of copies and get them where they need to go.

A teletypewriter (TTY) phone also is available. A TTY allows people with hearing or speech loss to make and receive telephone calls by typing their conversations as two-way text.



Public Access Room (PAR) staffers check the status of a bill online at one of the computer terminals available to the public. From left to right: PAR Coordinator Suzanne Marinelli, Robbie Watland, Virginia Beck.

The Public Access Room a Division of the Legislative Reference Bureau

Toll-Free Numbers:

Maui **984-2400** extension 70478
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<http://www.state.hi.us/lrb/par/>

Legislative Internship Program Highlights Abilities of Hawai'i's Retarded Citizens



Jennifer Chow, Office Manager for the Office of Sen. J. Kalani English, presents Mike Higashi with a lei at a Capitol ceremony thanking Arc in Hawai'i participants for their week-long internship.

A Visit to Kalaupapa



Sen. J. Kalani English and 13th District Representative Mele Carroll, who represent Kalawao County, traveled to Kalaupapa for a February 28 community hearing. From left to right: Rep. Carroll, Sen. English, Meli Watanuki, Puna Ramos, Rep. Rida Cabinilla.

Since 1999 the Arc in Hawai'i, the local branch of a nationwide organization of and for people with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities, has been sponsoring a week-long internship program at the State Capitol. Arc in Hawai'i staff members encourage the people they work with to become full participants in their communities, and the members of the Capitol community have come to look forward to their yearly visit. For the 2005 Legislative Session, Arc interns spent the first week of March helping out with the many tasks that make up the working day in a busy Capitol office.

Helping people "understand what persons with disabilities can do – not just what they can't do" – that's how Tanya Davis, an assistant trainer at the Arc, describes what her organization is working to accomplish. She and Mike Higashi worked together as a team during their week helping out the staff at the office of Senator J. Kalani English. Tanya is a teacher, tour guide, counselor, and friend to Mikey, and says she is always glad to have the opportunity to work with him.

"It's about teaching independence," Tanya says. She's not on the job to do things for Mikey; she's there to help him increase his own sense of self-reliance. And the rewards are great. "When they learn something new," she says, "We're like 'yeah!' We get excited right along with them."

In a ceremony in the Capitol Auditorium at the end of the internship week, a number of lawmakers commented on the joyous spirit the Arc volunteers brought to their work. Tanya Davis sees that openness and love of learning in the people she works with every day – and that's what makes her job special to her. "People like Mikey lead carefree lives; they're not stressed out. They're just happy about every thing, and you can see it."



Tanya Davis and Legislative intern Mike Higashi: learning to work as a team.

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Capitol Memorial Service Honors the Sacrifice of Hawai'i-Based Marines

Family members were the guests of honor at the ceremony, which filled the Capitol Rotunda.

The crash of a CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter in western Iraq on January 26 of this year took the lives of 28 Kane'ohe-based Marines from the First Battalion of the Third Marine Regiment. In a ceremony at the State Capitol Rotunda on March 7, the people of Hawaii honored the memory of the men who died that day.



Senators J. Kalani English and Norman Sakamoto pay their respects.



At the front of the podium, each Marine was identified by a photograph, his helmet, his weapon, his dog tags, and his boots.

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