



## JOINT TASK FORCE REVIEWS STATE HIGHWAY FUND

On November 20, 2007, a Joint Senate and House Task Force met to review the financial status and requirements of the State Highway Fund. Chaired by the Senator J. Kalani English (chair of the Senate Transportation and International Affairs Committee) and Representative Joseph Souki (chair of the House Transportation Committee), the task force placed its emphasis on whether the fund's current sources of revenue are adequate, and how they compared to other potential sources.

"Transportation is a core concern for Hawai'i," said Senator English, "no matter what part of the state you live in. The highway fund determines whether we can afford to pay for necessary maintenance and improvements to our transportation system, so its health will have a significant impact on our natural, business, and social environments."

The state highway fund provides funding for construction and maintenance projects across Hawai'i, and allows the state to qualify for federal "matching funds" for projects with costs that might otherwise exceed the state's ability to pay.

"One priority at the top of our list is seeing how we can balance the revenue streams that contribute to the highway fund, so that the money is there when we need it," Senator English added.

Brennon Morioka, Deputy Director for Highways of the Department of Transportation, submitted a report to the task force, addressing questions and concerns relating to previous and current DOT projects, funding, and capacity. "I'm not going to say that this report has all the answers," Morioka said, "but it's a good start at opening the dialogue and looking at alternatives to revenue sources and contracting services at this forum. Everything we do is here on the table."

The forum provided an opportunity for members of the Senate and House to receive an update on the fund, and a chance to discuss their concerns regarding transportation planning and funding.

"There was a lot of information presented today, and we'll take the opportunity to discuss it thoroughly and see where it goes," said Senator English. "The most important aspect of our meeting is that we have some assurances that the department has thought about these questions, and they are willing to work with us in providing answers. And this is going to pay dividends during the next legislative session, because it will allow us to understand the issues more completely, and make sure the law addresses our community's needs."

- ▶ Chair, Committee on Transportation and International Affairs
- ▶ Vice Chair, Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs
- ▶ Member, Committee on Ways and Means
- ▶ Member, Committee on Economic Development and Taxation



## A Message From Kalani

As we reflect on the past year and anticipate 2008, it is important to remember that we are one community with the blessing of diversity. I ask that each and every one of us take a moment and give thanks for all of our abundance that we share on Maui, Moloka'i, Lānai and Kaho'olawe.

In this issue, we will review the activities of the last two weeks. This has been a busy time, from convening the Joint Task Force to Review the Highway Fund, Thanksgiving celebrations in Kīpahulu, Maohi Festivals on O'ahu and Regional meetings of Pacific Island Leaders. Finally, I share my commentary on the aftermath of the Superferry debacle with you.

I extend to you and your family warm wishes for a memorable holiday season. Please let me hear from you with suggestions for the 2008 legislative session.

Aloha,



## MAOHI FESTIVAL CELEBRATES LIFE AND CULTURE

Hundreds celebrated the fifth annual Maohi Native Cultural Festival on 17 and 18 November at Queen Kapi'olani Park Bandstand in Honolulu.

Senator J. Kalani English was present for the two-day event, which showcased music, dance, arts, crafts, history, voyaging, and other important cultural practices and values that sustain the way of life and living for indigenous people. "This is a wonderful festival that encourages unity, peace, healing and aloha through culture," said Sen. English. "This gathering helps support the sustainability and preservation of Polynesian cultural heritage and traditions."

The festival is held during the significant time of year for all Polynesians called the "Makahiki". It's the time of harvesting, blessings of fresh foods, and the time of Lono, the Hawaiian God of peace and abundance. In ancient days, war ceased and differences were set-aside during this time.

The two-day event showcased entertainers representing many traditional cultural groups from Tahiti Nui, Rapa Nui, Aotearoa, Tonga, Samoa, Marquesas, Tokelau, and other Polynesian-Pacific Islanders. A few of the entertainers present included Te Vai Ura Nui, Melveen Leed, Weldon Kekauoha, Vaihi, Ra'iatea Helm, and Amy Hanaiali'i Gilliom.

Each year during the festival, the Maohi Culture Award is given to selected individuals and cultural organizations for their contributions and continued efforts of perpetuating cultural and spiritual education, teachings and practices that contribute to the health, wellness and healing of the people in their community through their life's work or calling. Last year, Sen. English was a recipient of this reward.

The eight recipients for 2007 Maohi Cultural Awards are: Billy Richards, President of Na Hoaloha O Hokule'a a Hawai'iloa; Keone Nunes, Native Artisan in Traditional Tattoo; Nainoa Thompson, President of Polynesian Voyaging Society; Dennis Pu'uhonua Kanahela, Native Hawaiian



*Ariimihi of Bora Bora and Sen. English enjoy the festivities at the 5th Annual Maohi Cultural Festival in Waikiki. The 4th annual festival was held in Tahiti last year.*

Cultural Practitioner; Tauhiti Nena, Tahitian Minister of Culture & Sports (Tahiti); Richard Ariihau Tuheiaiva, President of Na Papa E Vau (Opoa-Raiatea); Hinaleimoana Wong, Kumu at Halau Lokahi Hawaiian Public Charter School; and Keali'i'olu'olu Gora, President of Ka Lei Papahi O Kakuhihewa Kupauna Education Program at Kamakakuokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Sen. English introduced **SB 1035 S.D. 1** last legislative session to establish 20 November of each year as Makahiki commemoration day in Hawai'i. The Senate passed the bill, and it is currently in the House committee on Tourism and Culture (TAC) awaiting approval.

Currently, regional governments in Polynesia celebrate the Makahiki season on that date as the start of the observance. "This will help to not only keep Hawaiian culture but all Polynesian cultures alive here in the islands," said Sen. English. "More importantly, this will help perpetuate the ancient wisdom of land conservation, abundance, unity, and peace not just during the months of Makahiki, but at all times."

## SUPERFERRY DEBATE HEALTHY, NECESSARY

Now that Maui Circuit Court Judge Joseph Cardoza has lifted his earlier injunction preventing Hawai'i Superferry from sailing into Kahului harbor, removing the final legal impediment to the ferry's operation, some may question whether the vocal opposition to the ferry served any meaningful purpose. After all, there had long been a discussion in the community over whether the legislature would go into Special Session to allow the Superferry to operate while an environmental review is conducted. The bill's passage by a vote of 20-5 in the Senate and 39-11 in the House of Representatives was almost anticlimactic.

But the Senate vote, at least, merits a second look. Fourteen of those "yes" votes were "with reservations." That is a very high number of my colleagues expressing reservations about the process, and the fact that we were asked to pass a law

that would allow a single company to do business, despite what the existing law required up until that point.

In my mind, that vote mirrored the uncertainty of the community in general. While polls showed that a majority of the public supported the Hawai'i Superferry, most of us also support the protection of our natural and cultural resources, and expect that laws to protect the environment will be followed. The central problem was not with the Superferry itself. A high-capacity inter-island ferry service does provide a transportation alternative for Hawai'i residents and visitors. Maui County, which includes the district that I represent, has more experience with ferries than any other place in the state; we have had an inter-island ferry service for years, running between Maui, Moloka'i and Lana'i, and with very good ridership. As the only senator with a district that spans four

islands, I know that people value having that alternative. I believe that the core concern for those who expressed reservations, both in the Senate and in the community, was not with what was done, but how it was done. Creating a separate environmental review process, even for a desirable service that enjoys broad public support, was an extraordinary act. The management of the Hawai'i Superferry did little to improve matters. Rather than support a bill passed by the Senate in the past session which would have allowed the ferry to run while an environmental assessment was completed, or even to propose amendments to address any concerns they may have had, they lobbied for its defeat. And rather than engage the community in a meaningful discussion of public concerns, they unleashed their PR machine, began service before their announced commencement date, and tried to buy public support with artificially low fares. Each of the senators who voted no on the Superferry bill - myself included - attended at least one Neighbor Island informational briefing to hear from the communities that would feel the direct effects of the Superferry service.

I found it impossible to come away from those meetings without a profound sense of the deep feelings the controversy engendered.

In the end, my concern for the environment, the community, and the established review process convinced me that a "no" vote was warranted. But I have no quarrel with my colleagues who voted "yes," or "with reservations." I respect the fact that we all considered the information before us and reached different conclusions, and understand that mutual respect is critical to our continuing to serve our respective districts.

I hope the rest of our community - divided as it has been by the Superferry controversy - will likewise be able to look beyond those divisions and consider the long-term need for mutual respect. And as the task force created by the Superferry bill performs its mandated review of ferry operations, I hope there will always be room for discussion and diversity of opinion.

### Association of Pacific Island Legislatures (APIL) Meet in Kosrae, Federated States of Micronesia



Governor Robert Weilbacher of Kosrae host APIL Delegates to a welcoming reception. Sen. English and Gov. Weilbacher discuss Hawai'i's role in the Pacific at the reception.

(KOSRAE, Micronesia) Delegates from across the Pacific met in the Federated States of Micronesia State of Kosrae for the 48th Board of Directors meeting of the **Association of Pacific Island Legislatures (APIL)** on 27-29 November 2007. Legislative representation from 10 island entities were given a warm reception by the people of Kosrae, an

island with a population of a little more than 5,000 people, before the official meetings began.

Sen. J. Kalani English serves as APIL's Vice President, and along with Rep. Glenn Wakai holds Hawai'i's seat in the organization. "Hawai'i has a strong interest in the Pacific region," noted Sen. English. "We are better served when Hawai'i is at the table for discussions."

Delegates of the 10 member nations spent two days discussing a variety of issues including humanitarian efforts in the region, tobacco's effects on the health of Pacific Islanders, soil conservation efforts, how climate changes are dramatically affecting the eco-system of various islands, and economic growth spurred by rural development loans.

"These topics of our discussions are pivotal in the future of Pacific Islanders," said Sabino Sauchomal, President of APIL, "Our delegates are taking home valuable information which

we anticipate will prompt policy changes. The gathering also reinforced members' commitment to harmonizing their collective voices for the betterment of the region."

Sen. English pointed out that "dialogue is a key step in bringing attention to our shared struggles. I came away from the gathering with a deeper understanding of challenges affecting our neighbors."

Legislators and staff listened to presentations, and also debated a number of important resolutions. Aren Palik, the President and Chief Executive Officer of the **Pacific Islands Development Bank (PIDB)**, updated the organization on the status of its bank. "PIDB continues to expand its lending program and other technical support to its members. We have many successful projects, and have helped lots of small



APIL Senators at the closing of the Kosrae Meeting, Kosrae, 29 Nov 2007. Seen here are, (L to R) Kosrae Senators Gibson T. Shiba & Ili D. Abraham, Pacific Islands Development Bank President & CEO Aren Palik, Hawaiian Senator J. Kalani English, and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Representative Absalon V. Waki.

## Land set aside in Kīpahulu thanks to designer Sue Wong

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Kīpahulu has a lot to be thankful for, and renowned clothing designer Sue Wong added to that bounty by her recent purchase of Mae's Landing with an agreement to protect this area in the future and the establishment of a private endowment for the Kīpahulu community. Sen. English honored Sue at the annual Kīpahulu Community Association Thanksgiving luncheon in a short ceremony before he gave the blessing. "Sue is a wonderful part of our community, and her generous gift exemplifies her commitment to protecting this fragile lifestyle," said Sen. English. In her address to the community, Sue stated, "My plan is to be her for the long term. Kīpahulu is my home."



Designer Sue Wong & Sen. English, Kīpahulu Thanksgiving, 22 Nov 2007

Sen. English had Sue sit in the middle of the community circle, and he draped her with cloth as a symbol of thanks on behalf of the community. Around 200 residents participated in the community thanksgiving. "I have been attending these gatherings for over 10 years. My grandmother loved to visit with her long-time friends here, and I always remember her on this day" said Sen. English. "Grandma Violet would have been very proud of what Sue has done for us."



Leaders from across the Pacific met in Kosrae, Federated States of Micronesia from 27 -29 November 2007 for the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures' (APIL) 48th Board of Directors meeting. Sen. English is the Vice President of APIL.

businesses to thrive." PIDB was created by a resolution of APIL in 1987 during its meeting in American Samoa. The Bank serves all member countries that have made the initial equity contribution of \$1 million. "We still have a few members who have not yet purchased their shares in the bank" said Palik. "All shares purchased are reinvested back into the country that made the purchase. This is a boon to the region and is well worth the initial investment by the member countries."

Delegates also discussed the important role of tradition in our islands. "Our tradition is our future," said Sen. English. "At the same time, change must be embraced."

APIL members in attendance hail from the following countries: American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, FSM State of Chuuk, FSM State of Kosrae, FSM State of Pohnpei, FSM State of Yap, Island of Guam, Republic of Kiribati, Republic of Palau, and State of Hawai'i.

APIL consists of lawmakers from member countries whose goal is to improve the quality of life for their people. For further information, please visit our website at: [www.pacificlegislatures.com](http://www.pacificlegislatures.com).



Aunty Carry Ross of Kīpahulu talks story with Sen. English at the annual Kīpahulu Community Association Thanksgiving celebration.

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