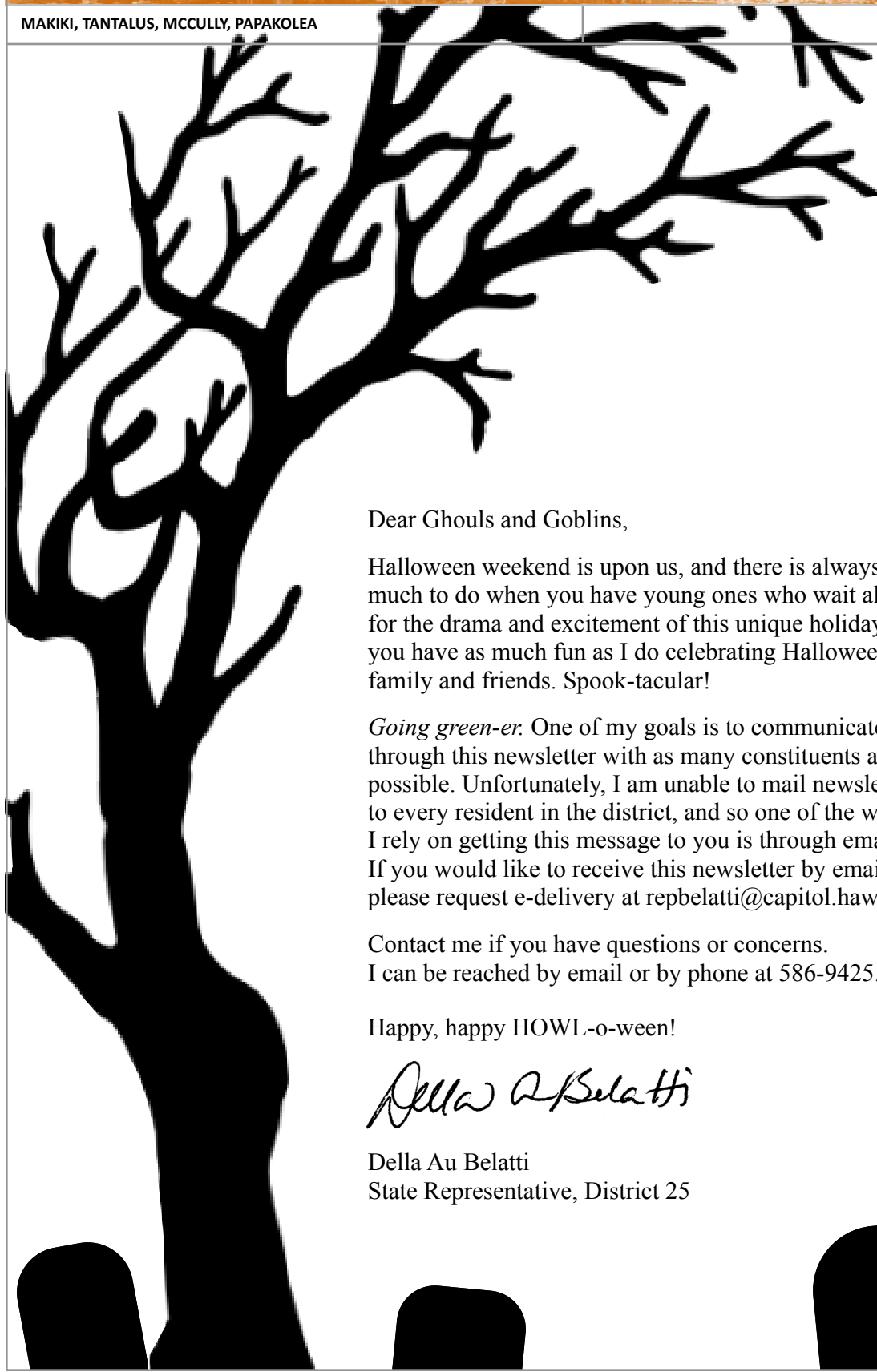


District 25 News



MAKIKI, TANTALUS, MCCULLY, PAPAOLEA

OCTOBER 2010



Dear Ghouls and Goblins,

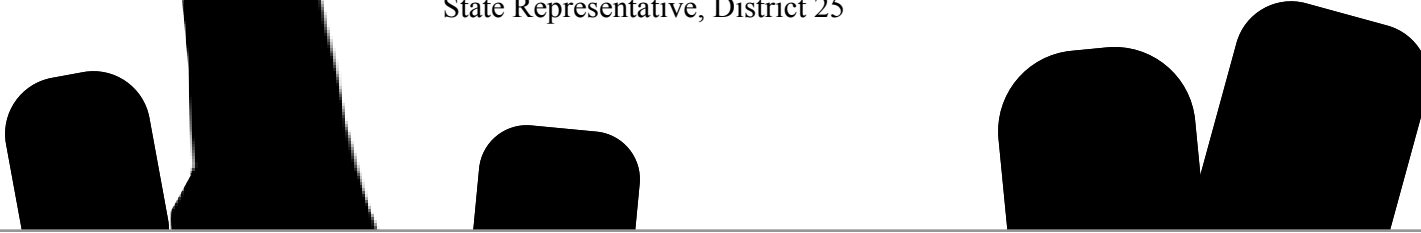
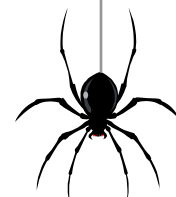
Halloween weekend is upon us, and there is always so much to do when you have young ones who wait all year for the drama and excitement of this unique holiday. I hope you have as much fun as I do celebrating Halloween with family and friends. Spook-tacular!

Going green-er. One of my goals is to communicate through this newsletter with as many constituents as possible. Unfortunately, I am unable to mail newsletters to every resident in the district, and so one of the ways I rely on getting this message to you is through email. If you would like to receive this newsletter by email, please request e-delivery at repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov.

Contact me if you have questions or concerns. I can be reached by email or by phone at 586-9425.

Happy, happy HOWL-o-ween!

Della Au Belatti
State Representative, District 25



Hawaii's Race to the Top

EDUCATIONAL REFORM SEEMS TO BE HITTING PEAK STRIDE THESE DAYS both nationally and locally. Here in Hawaii, we experienced the hard-won battle over school furloughs, cheered our \$75 million U.S. DOE Race to the Top prize, and are now crossing words over the state constitutional amendment proposal for an appointed Board of Education. Kahala Theaters just premiered "Waiting for Superman," the new cause documentary from the director of "An Inconvenient Truth," that claims to tackle the difficult truths about America's flagging education system. But what more can we expect to look forward to in terms of change? We take our first look at the aggressive new program that's got everyone excited.



In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided \$4.35 billion for the U.S. Department of Education's "Race to the Top" program ("RTTP") – an ambitious national grant competition designed to encourage and reward states that are creating, implementing, and executing programs for innovation and reform in education. After an exhaustive application process including a thousand plus pages of documentation, flawed first-round application, and grueling in-person peer panel interview, Hawaii reached for the top and won \$75 million in grant monies to fund state education plans and programs for improved student performance.

State applicants and presentations were assessed and graded according to 19 criteria including a capacity for success, acceptance of common standards and assessments, data systems to support instruction, clear pathways that create and support great teachers and leaders, and plans to turnaround the lowest-achieving schools. RTTT selection criteria also gave preference to states who demonstrated a comprehensive approach to education reform, emphasized STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines),

planned methods to improve early learning, and/or planned to create a more seamless pre-school to graduate school (P-20) route for students.

Hawaii's RTTT application includes a 200+ page narrative detailing the State's reform agenda and over 900 pages of support documents that serve as a primer on many of our most pressing education issues. The winning application, live :30 presentation, and 1:00 follow-up question and answer session put forward ideas for setting clear educational goals with high expectations, committing to individual student success, demonstrating Hawaii's current progress and preparedness to improve further, and driving overall student performance. Hawaii's stated performance goals included 100% student proficiency in reading and math, an overall high school graduation rate of 90%, and a high school graduates college-going rate of 62%, all by 2018.

Although the RTTT Program is still in its early stages, critics say that RTTT grant monies are a "dangled carrot" used to place the education system further under the domain of the federal government, and shift deci-

Continued on page 3

Speeding up the Race to the Top

“Last year, we set aside more than \$4 billion to improve our schools - one of the largest investments in reform in our nation's history. But we didn't just hand this money out to states that wanted it; we challenged them to compete for it. And it's the competitive nature of this initiative that we believe helps make it so effective. We laid out a few key criteria and said if you meet these tests, we'll reward you by helping you reform your schools.

“First, we encouraged states to adopt more challenging standards that will actually prepare our kids for college and their careers. We also encouraged schools to adopt better assessments -- not just one-size-fits-all approaches -- to measure what our kids know and what they're able to do.

“Second, we urged schools and school districts to make sure we have excellent principals leading our schools and great teachers leading our classes by promoting rigorous plans to develop and evaluate teachers and

principals and by rewarding their success.

“Third, we urged states to use cutting-edge data systems to track a child's progress throughout their academic career, and to link that child's progress to their teachers so we know what's working and what's not working in the classroom. Fourth, we encouraged states to show a stronger commitment to turning around some of their lowest-performing schools.

“And even before states have received a single dime of taxpayer money, many of them have committed to instituting important reforms to better position themselves for a Race to the Top grant. Forty-eight states have now joined a nationwide partnership to develop a common set of rigorous, career-ready standards in reading and math. Wisconsin has enacted legislation permitting schools to link student achievement to the performance of teachers and

principals. In Illinois, Louisiana, Tennessee, California, we've seen changes in laws or policies to let public charter schools expand and succeed. These are public schools with more independence that are formed by teachers, parents, and community members.

“So by rewarding some of these states submitting applications today, by extending the Race to the Top for states, by launching a Race to the Top among school districts, and by applying the principles of Race to the Top to other federal programs, we'll build on this success. We're going to raise the bar for all our students and take bigger steps towards closing the achievement gap that denies so many students... a fair shot at their dreams.”



Remarks by President Obama during a visit to Graham Road Elementary School in Fall Church, Virginia, January 19, 2010. Retrieved October 21, 2010, from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2010/01/19/speeding-race-top>

Getting to the top *continued from page 2*

sion making from local education authorities, parents, and teachers. Other critics decry RTTT's emphasis on charter schools and national common core standards, and say RTTT precludes states with working educational reforms that might not look like the federal government plan for reform. And still others refute US DOE and President Obama's claims that the national standards that form the basis for many of RTTT's evaluation criteria are not founded in valid empirical evidence.

Kathryn Matayoshi, HIDOE Interim Superintendent of Education, pointed out in the oral portion of the presentation that the resulting Hawaii application is the basis for the state education strategic plan. And so even if Hawaii hadn't succeeded in RTTT, the massive effort to put together the State's response seems to have had its own benefits. Hawaii did its homework and hammered out a comprehensive vision and ambitious plan to transform our state's education system. Now we have some funding to get us started on the

right path, and optimism and momentum seem to be at its highest. Next challenge, the incredible work of getting it done.

We invite you comment on *District 25 News* articles and issues by writing to:

Representative Della Au Belatti
State Capitol, Room 331
Honolulu, HI 96813

repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov

An electronic copy may also be downloaded from the Rep. Belatti's House Majority web page at http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hsemaj/.belatti_della.html.

Sounding off

Some good reasons to vote

By BERNA FO

“Even the decision not to vote, is a vote.”
—Chris Lee, Makiki-Tantalus Neighborhood Board member,
October 21, 2010

Politicians and elected officials are among those who spend a lot of time looking at voter turnout—the percentage of eligible voters who voted in an election. They like to ask, who is voting? And who isn't? What made them vote? Why aren't they voting? What does this all mean? Political scientists look at low voting numbers and make pronouncements about citizen apathy, disenchantment, and sometimes even contentment.

Regardless of what voter turnout numbers might signify, there are gads of reasons why you should vote. But for the space I have here, here are four good ones that I thought were worth the real estate:

A democracy works—in fact, the ONLY way it works—is if citizens are active participants.



A system of the people, for the people, and by the people, doesn't exist without the people. Voting is one of the easiest ways a single person can contribute to maintaining a healthy, productive, and working democracy.

You give those who vote, the power to make decisions for YOU.

If the idea of “civic duty” doesn't do it for you, you should know that someone who votes has more influence on who wins an election and therefore more influence on the policies government makes than someone who doesn't. This means someone else will make important choices about your education, healthcare, and environment—to name a few—for you.

Eh, no vote, no grumble.

When you decide not to vote, you take yourself out of the collective decision making process, and it says you're ok with what others decide for you. So no grumble when you don't like what's been decided.

Vote, because you can.

Voting is one of the most basic and open exercises of democracy that a citizen can choose to do of their own free will. There's no U.S. law that requires you to vote as a condition of citizenship, and unlike citizens in some other countries you have the fundamental right to participate in your government. It's one of the truly great things about our country.

If you have the power to vote, vote because you can.

The Shortlist

Thursdays, October 28 &
November 4, 11, 18

Makiki Farmers' Market,
The Parish of St. Clement's
@ 4:30pm-dusk

From the website:

“The Makiki Farmers' Market at St. Clement's is among the most beautiful farmers' markets on the Island of Oahu, offering high quality foods and locally grown produce. Enjoy a friendly atmosphere as you shop, dine in or take out.”

For additional information,
please visit www.makiki-farmersmarket.com.

Saturday, October 30, 2010

Makiki Community Library
Annual Meeting, Makiki
Community Library at Makiki
District Park
@ 10:00am

Come meet the Library Board of Directors, board members, and day-to-day volunteers over coffee and treats at the Makiki Community Library's annual meeting. Hear about accomplishments from the last year and programs for the coming year.

For more info about this event or other activities at the Library, visit www.Makiki.info.

All of
November

Adult & Keiki Computer Classes
with 'Ohana Komputer
@ Makiki Community Library

FREE basic skills computer and internet classes for adults and keiki (K-8) available through the month of November.

Registration is required. For more info and the class schedule, call 523-8191 or visit www.Makiki.info. Sponsored in thanks to 'Ohana Komputer and Friends of Makiki Community Library.

