

Senator Michelle Kidani

(D) Senate District 18– Serving Mililani Town, Waipio Gentry, Waikele, Village Park, Royal Kunia



Aloha, friends and neighbors:

In just a few short weeks, on Wednesday, January 16, the 2013 Legislative session will convene. The Senate has reaffirmed its leadership and committee structure, again selecting Maui Senator Shan Tsutsui to serve as President.

I am pleased to have been re-appointed Vice Chair of the Ways and Means Committee that will decide on budget priorities for the two years beginning July 1, 2013. My specific committee responsibility will again be to formulate the Senate's approach to the state's construction plans. We made substantial progress in kick-starting long-stalled repair and renovation projects at state facilities during this year, and we will continue to seek ways to improve infrastructure and employ the many private sector companies who work on all phases of these jobs - from planning to design to hands-on construction.

Recent news about the state's economy indicates that conditions are beginning to stabilize. Tax revenues are up, thanks to record spending by visitors to the islands. The unemployment rate has dropped to 5.5 percent, although we know that not everyone who wants to work has found a job yet. The latest report from state economists says:

- ◆ Construction jobs increased 1.4 percent during the third quarter of 2012 after 17 consecutive quarters of decline
- ◆ State construction spending increased 32.9 percent during the first nine months of the year
- ◆ Private building permit values increased 39.1 percent during the same time period

In addition, the administration announced last week that it had successfully sold more than \$850 million in general obligation bonds at near record low interest rates to continue funding projects that the Legislature has approved.

While conditions are improving, our challenge as state policy makers is to assure that Hawaii's economy is built on a more diversified base so that we are not severely impacted by global events that are beyond our control. It is a balance for which we always strive and that should receive more attention this year as a recovering economy allows us to take a deep breath and refocus, rather than continuing to operate in crisis mode.

Me ke Aloha,

Senator Kidani's 2013 Committee Assignments

Committee on Ways and Means, Vice Chair - overall state financing policies, including revenue enhancement, taxation and other revenues, and cash and debt management; statewide implementation of planning, programming, budgeting and evaluation; and government structure and finance. I will again have primary responsibility for the Senate's priorities for State construction projects.

Committee on Education, Vice Chair - early education, public schools and the state's public libraries, and the **Committee on Higher Education** - covering the University of Hawaii's ten campuses, including the four-year campuses and the seven community colleges

Committee on Hawaiian Affairs - programs relating to burial councils and Hawaiian affairs, including OHA, sovereignty and Hawaiian Home Lands

Committee on Human Services - public assistance; Medquest; youth services; early childhood education and care programs under the Department of Human Services; vocational rehabilitation; long term care; programs relating to the promotion of the general well-being of Hawaii's youth, families, and elderly population; and homeless and public housing

MHS welcomes new Principal back to campus

Mililani High School's new Principal has deep roots at the school. He is **Fred Murphy, MHS Class of '88**, who served as Trojan Band Director from 1993 to 2005, and as Vice Principal from 2006 to 2009.



Welcome back to MHS, celebrating 40 years of excellence in our Mililani community!



Mililani Uka Fall Fest a fun time for all!

Earlier this month, I enjoyed the company of students and their parents at the Mililani Uka Elementary Fall Fest. <<<< Face painters contributed their artistic talents. At my table, we handed out Keiki Safety DNA ID kits. >>>>

The kits are still available. If you'd like one, call my Capitol office ~ 586-7100.



Issues update . . .

Two issues captivated public attention over the summer. The Legislature has been monitoring progress toward resolution to assure accountability for the use of public funds.

Public School Bus Transportation - Sudden cuts and changes to school bus service, blamed on budget shortfalls, left students in some areas with no bus routes that families had come to count on. An audit of the school bus system raised serious questions about runaway costs, inadequate monitoring of expenses and routes, and a need for a change in procedures.

The Department of Education has completed its analysis of the crisis, and plans to present its report and several recommendations at a Board of Education meeting in early December.

UH Concert Scam - Some of the legal issues surrounding a scam that resulted in the loss of more than \$200,000 in UH funds are progressing through the law enforcement process. But serious questions remain unanswered about UH procedures for handling funds, and the substantial expenditure of yet more money - more than \$1 million - on outside legal and public relations counsel in efforts to investigate and "explain" how all of this happened. A Special Senate Committee on Accountability has now issued its findings and recommendations that will be presented to the full Senate in January to consider actions that will help to prevent these kinds of incidents from occurring in the future.



A successful session depends on public participation. Here is some information about how you can make suggestions, attend public hearings either in person or by watching them on public access television, testify on specific bills and follow their progress through the session. Let us hear from you; our job is to assure that government is responsive to people's needs.

The Hawaii State Legislature's Web site has won national recognition for its design and the comprehensive range of information it offers to the public. You can track bills, access the latest drafts, follow committee hearings, find out how to submit testify on bills either in person or online, and view current announcements about the session. On the Web at <http://capitol.hawaii.gov/>.

The Legislature's Public Access Room is your office at the Capitol, where you'll find computers for your use and knowledgeable staffers ready to help you prepare testimony, TV monitors to watch hearings in progress, resource materials to do research, printed handouts, including maps, and contact numbers for legislators and committees to help you find your way around the Capitol. Open to the public, all services free, in Room 401. Call them at 587-0478, or visit their Web site at <http://capitol.gov/lrb/par>.

Check out these Holiday Events happening in our neighborhoods in the next few weeks!



Saturday, December 1 - Mark the holiday season with several events here in our Mililani community:

- The annual **Mililani Christmas Parade** begins at 9 a.m. from Mililani Shopping Center to Mililani Town Center, where Christmas music, games, food booths, prizes and Santa visits are planned until 4 p.m.
- **Six tons of real snow** will be trucked to Mililani Shopping Center for keiki to enjoy from 9 a.m. to noon, along with choirs and crafts
- Mililani Town Association holds its **Holiday Craft and Gift Fair** from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. in Rec Center 5
- **Saturday, December 8** - **Mililani High School athletic booster club craft fair**, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., MHS Gym
- **Saturday, December 15** - **Mililani Uka Elementary "Save the Best for Last" craft fair**, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.