

The Voice of Business in Hawaii

MONDAY REPORT- From Chamber President Jim Tollefson- March 21, 2005

Taking a business approach

As Hawaii's traffic challenges increase, it becomes more and more apparent that solutions must be found. A possible solution being discussed at all levels of the community has been the idea of creating some type of mass transit system.

Last week, at the Chamber's Board of Directors meeting, Mass transit was placed in the forefront, currently due to **HB1309 HD2- relating to taxation**, which requires immediate attention. This bill allows the counties to levy a limited county surcharge (temporarily) on state general excise taxes to fund operating or capital costs for public transportation systems.

After lengthy meaningful discussions and debate between board members, some of the top business minds in the state, representing both large and small businesses, the Chamber's decision is to **oppose** this bill.

Although the Chamber agrees that mass transit may be a viable solution and funding would be needed, we believe that more research needs to be done to determine the causes of our traffic challenges, and whether mass transit is the solution. During this discussion, the issue was raised that there is a possibility this may not be a mass transit issue, but more of a transportation issue or to be specific a traffic issue. In addition, the board determined that it was too soon to be accepting a bill that will impact our financial resources and our ability to address other priority issues, such as education and housing. They expressed the importance of needing to have a solid plan devised with a budget attached, identifying where the funding will go. In other words, a "business plan".

Therefore a bill which raises taxes without identifying what "it" is we will be paying for, in our minds is putting "the cart before the horse".

Additional Legislative issues discussed were Bills **HB85 HD2 -relating to Harbors** and **HB1306 HD1- relating to sick leave**. Both bills are currently before the House and need immediate attention. See below for description of both bills.

I urge all of our members to get involved and submit testimony on these issues.

To view all of the Bills the Chamber has submitted testimony on and their current status, go to the Chamber website at www.cochawaii.org : *The Chamber's Legislative Update*.

Current bills needing your attention!

HB 85, HD 2 relating to harbors: This bill proposes to remove Honolulu Harbor Piers One and Two and transfer its jurisdiction to the Department of Transportation. The Chamber **supports** this as it believes this is the first step to ensuring critical maritime needs are addressed.

HB 1306 HD 1 relating to employment practices: This bill prohibits an employer or labor organization from discriminating against an employee who uses accrued and available sick leave in accordance with a valid collective bargaining agreement or valid

employment policy. The Chamber continues to **oppose** and offer strong opposition to a provision that effectively creates a new protected category of persons who “use” sick leave.

We need your support!

Contact our Government Affairs Department at randall@cochawaii.org or call 545-4300 ext 310.

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