

Aloha e Friends,

I hope you and your ‘ohana are safe and well. I’m in my 16th year of serving the people of West O‘ahu and I couldn’t be more proud and grateful for this honor. The 2022 Legislative Session certainly took off with a bang. In addition to the unfortunate news of corruption at the Capitol and preparing to deal with another session of COVID restrictions, my staff and I were faced with the unexpected departure of my session Agriculture Environment (AEN) Committee Clerk! This is a pivotal position in making sure bills get heard and session runs according to schedule. Fortunately, I have a great team, and everything is coming together well.

**COMMITTEE
CHAIR**

**AGRICULTURE &
ENVIRONMENT**

MEMBER

- ◆ Judiciary
- ◆ Government Operations

DISTRICT 20

Kapolei, Makakilo and portions of Ewa, Kalaeloa, and Waipahu

We’re almost half way through our 3rd session of being closed to the public.... until March 7, when, you probably saw in the news, the Capitol will open again. Legislators will still have the option to conduct hearings and meetings virtually. Those who continue to do business at the Capitol must wear masks and follow strict social distancing measures. Visitors must show proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test within 72 hours. More info to follow... Please contact me at (808) 586-6830 or sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov if I can help you or your family in any way. You can also follow me on Instagram @GabbardAloha, Facebook and YouTube.

Best wishes to you and your ‘ohana.

Me ke aloha pumehana,



LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

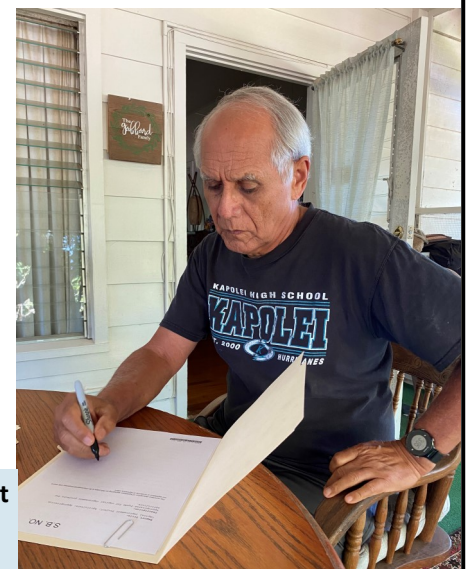
Climate Change Action

On February 17, 2022, I joined more than 250 local and state government officials, health professionals, small business owners, academics and environmental groups from 34 states plus the District of Columbia to send a letter to Congress urging them to quickly pass legislation to address climate change. Senate District 20, like most areas of Hawai‘i, is faced with climate impacts, such as sea level rise, increased temperatures, changes in rainfall, loss of native species, and coral reef damage. I was stoked that we were able to get our Climate Emergency resolution SCR44 adopted by both the Senate and House last session. As you probably remember, we were the first state in the country to do so, which is very important in terms of our state’s leadership nationally and internationally on this issue.

The Agriculture and Environment Committee

This session marks my 6th year as Chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and 14th year as Chair of the Senate Environment Committee. The Agriculture and Environment Committee, which I chair, holds hearings every M-W-F from 1pm to 2:30pm. In the past, we’ve had flexibility in terms of hearing end times, but since we moved to a digital platform last session, there’s a hard 2:30pm stop and we need to keep to a set schedule. Several of my priority bills are on their way to being voted on by the entire Senate. The bills that pass will cross over to the House on March 10.

Sen. Gabbard signs bills to meet the bill introduction deadlines.



AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT UPDATES

Get Involved in the Process

This year 1,386 bills were introduced in the Senate and 1,119 bills in the House for a total of 2,505 bills; the number is down compared to last session's total of 2,820. Each year, around 2,500 to 3,000 bills are introduced, and only 2-300 of them become law. Each committee has their own web page which lists all the bills the Committee plans to hear. It's critical to contact the Chairs and ask them to schedule any bills that are important to you. I encourage you to submit either written or oral testimony on the bills you're interested in. You'll need to sign-up via the Legislature's website at least 24 hours in advance. We set a two-minute timer on oral testimony. In the past I've always let people testify at my committee hearings without a time limit, but because of the strict timelines we've had to make adjustments. So, it will be important to summarize what you want to say, so that you can communicate your main points within the time limit.

Important dates to keep in mind:

FEB 18 – FIRST LATERAL (BILLS) – All bills referred to more than one committee must move to their final committee in the originating chamber by this day. Committees reports must be filed by the previous day, February 17. This was a major milestone. Not all bills make it past First Lateral. I'm happy to report several of my priority agriculture and environmental bills passed first lateral, so they're still advancing. I briefly mention those below.

FEB 24 - MAR 2 – MANDATORY 5-DAY RECESS – We're currently heading into a 5-day recess. And no, we don't get a holiday... Hawaii's Constitution mandates a 5-day recess between the 20th and 40th days of the regular session when neither the House of Representatives nor the Senate convenes or assembles formally in chamber. However, committee hearings still take place.

MAR 4 – FIRST DECKING (BILLS) – The deadline for bills to emerge from all their committees (with committee

reports filed) and submitted to the clerk is our next big deadline. This gives us time for a final review of all the bills before the "Third Reading" vote.

MAR 10 – FIRST CROSSOVER (BILLS) – If you remember how a bill becomes a law from your civic lessons, it must pass three readings (votes) in the originating chamber before it can move (or "crossover") to the other chamber. If successful, House bills are sent to the Senate and Senate bills are sent to the House for further consideration.... To be continued next month!



Senator Gabbard presents his Legislative Priorities during a Hawaii Environmental Change Agents (HECA) Virtual Event on February 19, 2022.

2022 PRIORITY LEGISLATION

I think we can all agree that protecting our environment in beautiful Hawai'i nei is critically important. I've introduced and championed legislation for the past 16 years to do just that. However, a huge passion of mine is actually growing young farmers! Did you know the average age of farmers in Hawai'i is 61? We also import 90% of our food at a cost of over 3 billion dollars annually. This doesn't make sense. We have land, we have great weather... but we need farmers! Below are some of the bills I've introduced to support farmers. Several passed their final committee today, which means they'll make it to Third Reading when the entire Senate will vote to pass it over to the House, or let it die...

AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT UPDATES

Agriculture education coordinator position ([SB2959](#))

Appropriates funds to the UH for the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources to establish one full-time agriculture education coordinator position.

Agricultural Emergency Special Fund ([SB2969](#))

Establishes an Agricultural Emergency Special fund to provide loans to farmers and ranchers for disaster recovery. Makes an appropriation. (SD1)

Beginning Farmer Training Program ([SB3197](#))

Establishes a Beginning Farmer Training Program. Makes an appropriation to the UH for the Beginning Farmer Training program.

Compost Reimbursement Pilot Program ([SB2955](#))

Requires the Department of Agriculture to establish a three-year compost reimbursement pilot program to provide reimbursements to farmers and ranchers when purchasing compost from a certified processor, dealer, retailer, or wholesaler licensed to do business in the State. Establishes a temporary compost reimbursement pilot program manager position. Requires the Department to submit a report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

Compost Reimbursement Program ([SB3004](#))

Establishes and appropriates funds for a compost reimbursement program within the department of agriculture and one full-time permanent compost reimbursement program manager position to oversee the program. Requires an annual progress report of the program to the legislature prior to each regular session.

Hemp Producers Licensing ([SB2986](#))

Removes certain duplicative regulations imposed on hemp producers in the State. Allows hemp producers to sell biomass directly to consumers. Requires that hemp produced in the State be labeled as Hawaii

produced and that hemp produced outside the State be labeled with the appropriate origin.

Little Fire Ant ([SB2996](#))

Appropriates \$600,000 to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (LNR402) for research, extension, and control of the little fire ant and other harmful ants.

ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS BILL PACKAGE

As co-chair of the Environmental Legislative Caucus, I joined with Rep. Nicole Lowen, to introduce our 2022 ELC bill package. The Environmental Legislative Caucus was created in December 2019 to bring like-minded legislators together on important environmental issues facing Hawai'i. Here are some of our priority bills that survived the First Lateral deadline and are awaiting a hearing in their final committee.

Soil Health Initiative ([SB2989](#))

This bill will promote agricultural practices that improve soil health. Farmers that adopt these practices will sequester more carbon, increase water infiltration, improve wildlife and pollinator habitat – all while harvesting better profits and often better yields. As one of my priority bills, I'm happy to report that this bill passed out of the Ways and Means Committee (WAM) on 2-22, and is now headed for Third Reading, when it will be voted on by the entire Senate.

Carbon Positive Incentive Program ([SB3325](#)/[HB2493](#))

This measure establishes the Hawai'i agriculture and forest carbon positive incentive program. This will keep forests and working agricultural lands intact. This will also provide incentives for farmers to adopt practices that sequester carbon while supporting local agriculture.

Cesspool Conversion ([SB368](#)/[HB1805](#))

This bill will require cesspool conversion within one year of sale of a property and establishes a tax credit for cesspool conversions to help offset the cost. WAM will hold a public decision making on 02-24.

DISTRICT 20 COMMUNITY UPDATES

Environmental Legislative Caucus Package, cont. p. 3

Green Amendment ([SB2962](#))

This bill will add a provision to the Bill of Rights section of the constitution to recognize and protect the rights of all people to pure water, clean air, a stable climate, and health environment.

Green Fees ([SB3192](#))

This bill establishes a visitor green fee program to collect a fee to allow visitors to visit a state park, beach, state-owned forest, hiking trail, or other state-owned natural area. The Committee on Ways and Means (WAM) will hold a public decision making on 02-24.

DISTRICT 20 COMMUNITY UPDATES

Capital Improvement Project Funding Released (CIP)

I'm pleased to announce I received a letter from the governor today, informing me that he's released \$135 million in funding for CIP funds I requested to widen Farrington Highway. Funds will be used to finance land, and for additional design and construction to widen Farrington Highway from Kapolei Golf Course to Fort Weaver Road. This will greatly enhance driving conditions for those of us who travel these roads on a regular basis. In addition, the governor wrote to let me know he's released \$1.7 million for Fort Barrette Road improvements! Funding will be used to finance construction for Fort Barrette Road improvements from the vicinity of Kama'aha Avenue to the vicinity of Farrington Highway. Mahalo, Gov!



Senator Gabbard donned his barong shirt and stopped for a quick pose before heading out to meet his colleagues and fellow members of the Filipino Legislative Caucus, who are mixed racially and ethnically, and have the common goal of helping the Filipino community who make up about 25% of Hawaii's total population. (February 22, 2022)



Every year, pre-COVID, the legislators of Filipino ancestry take a ceremonial photo in front of the Capitol. The photo was then usually featured as a cover for an issue of the Fil-Am courier, the Filipino community's foremost paper. This year, the photo shoot was expanded to include ALL of the Joint Filipino caucus.