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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO TARO.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature recognizes the need to develop  
2 non-genetic modification based solutions to protect taro from  
3 disease and insects on a statewide basis. In Senate Concurrent  
4 Resolution No. 206 (2007), the legislature requested the  
5 department of agriculture to develop a taro security and purity  
6 research program to save and protect taro from natural attack.

7           In 2007, 1,800,000 pounds of taro were imported to Hawaii.  
8 Under existing biosecurity rules, the department of agriculture  
9 was unable to inspect much of the imported taro to protect  
10 existing taro crops in the state.

11           At the same time, taro farmers are struggling with high  
12 rates of pest and disease infestation, rising crop and land  
13 costs, lack of access to quality water and land resources, a  
14 decline in crop cultivar biodiversity, and a decrease in the  
15 number of families continuing the taro farming lifestyle. Taro  
16 and taro farms are important in helping to promote Hawaii's  
17 economic vitality in agriculture, tourism, health and wellness,



1 and education and the arts. Taro and taro farms help to sell  
2 Hawaii to the world.

3 Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 206 (2007) requested the  
4 department of agriculture (DOA) to collaborate with taro growers  
5 and various native Hawaiian groups to develop and adopt a  
6 program that would:

- 7 (1) Allow DOA's biosecurity program to protect crops in  
8 Hawaii by inspecting foreign crops upon entrance to  
9 the state, thereby preventing any viruses or insects  
10 from entering the state;
- 11 (2) Allow alternative forms of research on taro other than  
12 genetic modification;
- 13 (3) Provide public outreach, engagement, and education on  
14 taro research and protection; and
- 15 (4) Request the United States Department of Agriculture to  
16 have the Alomae/Bobone virus disease complex and taro  
17 beetles designated as "actionable pests" in the  
18 findings of the United States Department of  
19 Agriculture and DOA report to prevent the entry of  
20 these pests into Hawaii from foreign countries.

21 DOA initiated a dialogue with taro farmers from each  
22 island, researchers and representatives from the University of



1 Hawaii, the Hawaii Farm Bureau, and the office of Hawaiian  
2 affairs to produce a joint report describing the outcomes and  
3 recommendations of the participants. The joint report,  
4 including proposed legislation, was forwarded to the  
5 legislature.

6 One of the primary recommendations of that report was to  
7 form a taro security and purity task force to guide policy and  
8 prioritize research for the protection of taro in Hawaii.

9 To ensure that the task force would have the full  
10 participation of taro farmers who have faced crop hardships for  
11 many years without financial assistance and whose resources are  
12 limited, the participants recommended that funds be appropriated  
13 for the task force for fiscal year 2008-2009.

14 The purpose of this Act is to establish the taro security  
15 and purity task force and appropriate funds for the formation  
16 and operation of the task force with full participation of taro  
17 farmers from all islands.

18 SECTION 2. (a) There is established the taro security and  
19 purity task force that shall be placed within the office of  
20 Hawaiian affairs for administrative purposes.

21 (b) The task force shall include one representative from  
22 each of the following:

- 1 (1) The office of Hawaiian affairs;
- 2 (2) The department of agriculture;
- 3 (3) The department of land and natural resources;
- 4 (4) The University of Hawaii; and
- 5 (5) The Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation.

6 The task force shall also include a minimum of two  
7 representatives from the taro farming communities of each of the  
8 islands of Kauai, Oahu, Maui, Molokai, and Hawaii, and one  
9 representative of botanical gardens or taro collections in the  
10 state.

11 At no time shall less than fifty per cent of the task force  
12 be comprised of taro farmers.

13 The members of the task force shall select a chairperson  
14 from among its members.

15 The task force members shall serve without compensation but  
16 shall be reimbursed for expenses, including travel expenses,  
17 incurred in the performance of their official duties.

18 (c) The objectives of the task force shall be to:

- 19 (1) Develop guidelines, protocols, and recommendations for  
20 taro policy, non-genetic modification based taro  
21 research, and the allocation of resources to ensure  
22 that taro is saved and protected in Hawaii;



- 1           (2)    Develop a program of incentives and projects that have  
2                    the support of a broad spectrum of taro growers that  
3                    will enhance taro security, protect taro purity,  
4                    provide support to taro farms and farmers, and improve  
5                    taro markets for the long-term;
- 6           (3)    Support the recovery of traditional Hawaiian taro  
7                    cultivars throughout the state;
- 8           (4)    Increase public awareness of the value of taro and its  
9                    role culturally, socially, in health and well-being,  
10                    environmentally, and economically in the state;
- 11          (5)    Develop a program to provide taro education and  
12                    training opportunities;
- 13          (6)    Develop a program for commercial taro growers to  
14                    maximize business viability and success;
- 15          (7)    Develop a taro farming grant program to assist taro  
16                    farmers in need to preserve the cultural legacy of  
17                    taro farming for future generations;
- 18          (8)    Discuss the feasibility and impact of requiring the  
19                    department of land and natural resources to provide  
20                    reduced lease rent rates for taro farmers on state-  
21                    leased land; and



1 (9) Develop taro research and outreach for the control and  
2 eradication of apple snails.

3 (d) The task force shall meet at times and locations to be  
4 determined by its members; provided that the first meeting of  
5 the task force shall be no later than three months after the  
6 effective date of this Act.

7 (e) The task force shall submit a report to the  
8 legislature summarizing its program, the results achieved,  
9 actual expenditures, and recommended legislation no later than  
10 twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of  
11 2009.

12 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
13 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much  
14 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2008-2009 to achieve  
15 the objectives of the taro security and purity task force, which  
16 may include:

17 (1) Convening and operating the task force, including  
18 conducting discussions on all islands;

19 (2) Contracting at least one person to facilitate,  
20 coordinate, communicate, and record the work of the  
21 task force;

- 1 (3) Conducting archival and ethnographic research of the  
2 history of taro and taro practices in Hawaii and the  
3 traditional Hawaiian cultivars to aid in its revival  
4 and to revise Bulletin 84: Taro Varieties in Hawaii  
5 (1939) which is the key reference for taro growers and  
6 researchers;
- 7 (4) Protecting the Molokai taro varieties collection, the  
8 oldest and most complete collection and source of taro  
9 varieties in Hawaii;
- 10 (5) Conducting taro research and outreach for the control  
11 and eradication of the apple snail; and
- 12 (6) Preparing the final report to be submitted to the  
13 legislature.

14 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the office of  
15 Hawaiian Affairs for the purposes of this Act.

16 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2020.



S.B. NO. 2915  
S.D. 2  
H.D. 1

**Report Title:**

Taro Security and Purity Task Force; Appropriation

**Description:**

Creates the Taro Security and Purity Task Force. Appropriates funds. (SB2915 HD1)

SB2915 HD1 HMS 2008-3612

