I enjoyed a very fruitful discussion with HSTA members from Moloka‘i and Lāna‘i, as we compared the educational needs of the rural areas. It is impressive when groups and organizations are thoughtful in their presentations to the Senate.

There are many issues facing us now, one of the most important is climate change and sea level rise. S.B. 559: Relating To Climate Change, a bill I introduced, passed the joint Senate Committees on Agriculture and Environment, Government Operations and Transportation and Energy. The bill is now in the committee on Ways and Means.

Please follow us and stay current on the issues by going to the following link: www.capitol.hawaii.gov

Senator J. Kalani English
Hawai‘i State Senate 7th District
Hāna, East and Upcountry Maui, Moloka‘i, Lāna‘i and Kaho‘olawe

HSTA Meets With Senator English

Hawai‘i State Teachers Association’s (HSTA) members from Moloka‘i, Lāna‘i and Maui travelled to O‘ahu on February 3rd for the annual HSTA Lobby Day. This annual event attracts HSTA members to the Capitol to meet with legislators on issues that are important to both students and teachers statewide. “Teachers are the single most important factor in determining student success,” said Sen. English. “If we expect our students to succeed academically, we need to ensure that we support our teachers to the fullest extent.”

This year, HSTA Government Relations Committee members Pat Niibu, Laura Buller and Romeo Eleno met with Sen. English to discuss an array of issues including the impact of weighted student formulas on small rural schools. In 2004, Act 51 established a weighted student formula to allocate moneys to schools according to the different costs of educating students with different needs. Despite its intent, the weighted student formula has placed small, remote schools at a disadvantage. In the case of Hāna High and Elementary school, the budgetary shortfall has resulted in the loss of several well-qualified teachers and has threatened the school’s ability to offer minimum course requirements for students to earn high school diplomas.

In response to this issue, Sen. English introduced SB 553, relating to the weighted student formulas. The bill passed out of the Senate Committee on Education. The bill requires that funding allocations for remote schools be determined by categorical allotments rather than the weighted student formula. This would include all schools in rural districts on Maui, Moloka‘i and Lāna‘i.

“The bill offers students in the 7th District the required courses needed for graduation so students will not have to travel a great distance to the closest public high school,” said Sen. English. “This will help in ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed academically.”
English Translation:

During the month of February, we are celebrating and encouraging the use of the Hawaiian language as one of two official state languages. The 2012 amendment to the Hawaii Revised Statues provided that the month of February be designated as “ʻOlelo Hawai‘i Month.” We look forward to reinforcing this directive by encouraging the use and practice of our native language in government affairs.

I have continued to advocate for the implementation of ʻOlelo Hawai‘i here at the State Capitol and in various capacities since joining the Senate in 2000. However, as I am the only Senator who speaks the language, I continue to face many obstacles with the implementation of ʻOlelo Hawai‘i. Therefore, I am faced with a big question: how do I continue to best advocate for the implementation of ʻOlelo Hawai‘i if a majority of the Senators do not speak the language?

I recognize the efforts of Sen. Karl Rhoads for his implementation of ʻOlelo Hawai‘i in all of his committee hearing notices. I want to thank Sen. Rhoads for his leadership in this effort to revitalize and normalize the Hawaiian language, especially here at the Capitol. He understands the value of implementing ʻOlelo Hawai‘i in our work at the State Capitol. It is my belief that if people begin to see more of ʻOlelo Hawai‘i, perhaps they may begin to implement it in their work place and daily use.

During the Hawaiian Kingdom and Territorial eras, all government operations were conducted in ʻOlelo Hawai‘i. Our rich historical legacy mandates that we continue governance in the path of those that have come before us. The implementation of the language is an important aspect, and I believe we must encourage our colleagues (and others) to begin using bits and pieces of it in our everyday affairs.

There is still much work to be done to normalize the Hawaiian language. However, if we begin to use Hawaiian in various capacities, it is a great opportunity to teach the general public so that we may be able to strengthen the value of our mother language.

I want to leave you with this excerpt from the Hawaiian language newspaper Ka Hōkū Hawai‘i: “Rise, grasp our mother tongue and go forth and let us be triumphant by being proficient in the Hawaiian language.”

Long live the Hawaiian language!
The Hawai‘i State Senate began posting the hearing notices for two standing committees in both the English and Hawaiian language as part of the Senate’s continuing initiative recognizing the State’s official languages.

The Senate Committee on Water and Land (WTL), chaired by Senator Karl Rhoads and the Committee on Hawaiian Affairs (HWN), chaired by Senator Maile Shimabukuro are the piloting the initiative to have the hearing notices posted in both languages.

“Through our legislative materials, this project reflects the responsibility and role of the Senate in showing respect for our host culture,” said Senate President Ronald D. Kouchi. “It makes sense these two important committees would be the first to expand on our Hawaiian language initiative.”

The Senate Order of the Day has been posted in dual languages along with the usage of Hawaiian diacritical markings in its public records since the Senate initiative on Hawaiian language was instituted in 2015.

“Government operations were conducted in the Hawaiian language up to the 1920’s so we have an entire lexicon that is the basis for all of our laws today,” said Sen. English. “This initiative proudly reflects the language revitalization in Hawai‘i.”

To view all current committee hearing notices in the 2017 Legislative Session, visit http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov

On February 6, Sen. English was honored to present a Certificate of Recognition to Lieutenant General (Retired) Daniel P. Leaf, who recently retired from his position as Director of the Daniel K. Inouye Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies (DKI APCSS); serving as the director for seven years. Lt. Gen. Ret. Leaf is also distinguished for his contributions to enhance security cooperation among government and non-government professionals during a critical period of national rebalance to the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. “Under Lt. Gen. Ret. Leaf’s leadership, the APCSS has become the premier institution for development of new ideas and relationships affecting regional security,” said Sen. English. “Lt. Gen. Ret. Leaf has also fostered a strategic partnership with the Senate, a relationship that we at the Senate value very much.”

Prior to APCSS, Lt. Gen. Ret. Leaf worked in the defense industry as vice president of full spectrum initiatives at Northrop Grumman Information Systems. Formerly the Deputy Commander of U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM), he retired from the U.S. Air Force in 2008 after more than 33 years of service.

“I am honored to know Dan for these many years,” said Sen. English. “The Senate is appreciative for his dedication and service to the people of Hawai‘i.”

For more information on the DKI APCSS, visit www.apcss.org

Moloka‘i High School proudly unveiled its new Science Building on January 27, 2017. This $4.7 million, state of the art building, is the result of a decade-long operating and capital improvement appropriation at the Hawai‘i State Legislature. “I allotted funds for the building in the fiscal biennium 2007-2009 budget,” said Sen. English, “And I am pleased our work at the Senate could allow for this important addition to Moloka‘i High School.” The design, construction, and equipment for two new science classrooms has finally come to fruition in this exciting new science space for Moloka‘i students. The model classrooms of the Science Building will now serve as a state-wide example of environmental sustainability for all schools.

The building itself features a rooftop water and catchment system that irrigates the school grounds, while the classrooms work to create natural lighting with an environmentally friendly classroom layout. The new building will also act as an important component to the schools’ growing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) program. Students here are already making their mark on the STEM program as the students have been recipients of numerous STEM awards over the years. This building will, without doubt, continue to inspire the next generation of science enthusiasts.
The second Sea Level Rise Vulnerability & Adaptation workshop was held on January 31 at the Japanese Cultural Center. Numerous organizations from around the State attended the workshop to network and collaborate on the topic of climate change. "The Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) is in the process of developing a Sea Level Rise Vulnerability & Adaptation Report (SLR Report) that is to be submitted in anticipation of the 2018 Hawai‘i State Legislature," said Sen. English. "These workshops are a valuable tool in helping us to address major climate change issues."

The SLR Report is the first state-wide assessment of the impacts of sea level rise on Hawai‘i’s coastal areas. The SLR Report will assist in preparing Hawai‘i for future sea level rise and present recommendations to reduce exposure to SLR hazards such as erosion and extreme flooding. The report also provides a roadmap for SLR adaptation that strives to improve resilience in the face of rapid global changes.

The main goal of these workshops is to help in refining the recommendations presented in the report. The gathering of individuals and organizations from the Native Hawaiian, scientific, architectural and engineering communities help in providing technical/professional expertise in regards to additional recommendations and implementation. The cooperation of government, nongovernmental and private sector communities also help in solving cross jurisdictional and intergenerational problems associated with climate change.

"We are already experiencing coastal flooding and erosion in low-lying areas of the State, especially in certain areas of Maui," said Sen. English. "These types of workshops and initiatives are important first steps in bringing awareness to the issue of climate change."