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Senator Mike Gabbard

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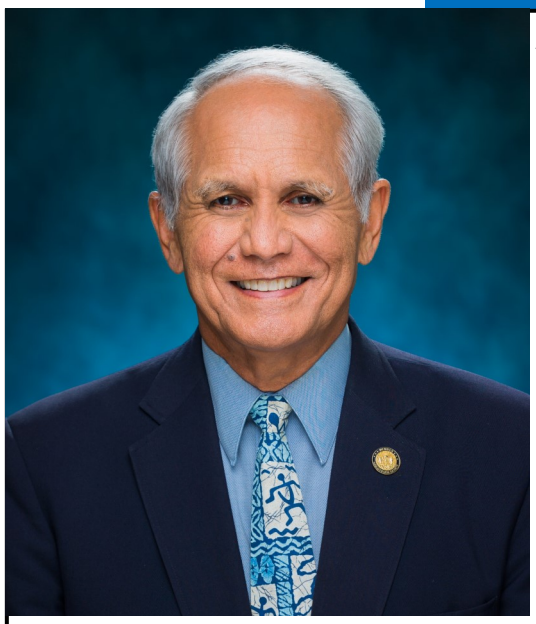

Aloha e Friends,

I hope you and your ‘ohana are safe and well and are looking forward to a wonderful Christmas and holiday season with family and friends. Please **Save the Date** for my next Virtual Listen Story meeting on **Jan. 8, 9-10AM**. If you’d like to attend, email me and I’ll send you the zoom link. ICYMI, you can view the recording from my November meeting here. (BTW, that’s me at the beginning singing a cut off my 2002 album “Stand as One.”) Please don’t hesitate to contact me at 586-6830 or sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov if I can help you or your family in any way. You can also follow me on Twitter @senmikegabbard, Instagram @GabbardAloha, or Facebook at @senmikegabbard.

Mike

COMMITTEE CHAIR

AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

MEMBER

- Judiciary
- Government Operations

DISTRICT 20

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

Red Hill Fuel Info Briefing

The biggest issue on many peoples’ minds is of course the disastrous situation at the Red Hill facility on O‘ahu and the contaminated water in surrounding communities. Like everyone, I’m hugely concerned. You may have seen the article in last week’s Civil Beat, which mentioned that I’d introduced legislation in 2020 that would have effectively shut down Red Hill by 2028… Unfortunately, the bill died. On Dec. 10, a joint hearing was called with the Senate Committees on Health; Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs; Agriculture and Environment; and the House Committees on Health, Human Services, & Homelessness; Corrections, Military, & Veterans; and Energy & Environmental Protection, to discuss the dire situation. Here’s a clip of my question to the Navy and their response. You can view the complete three-hour informational hearing on the Senate’s YouTube page.

Sen. Gabbard questioned the Navy regarding the leaking Red Hill fuel tanks, during a Legislative Info Briefing on Dec. 10. (Pictured L-R: Captain Michael McGinnis, Rear Admiral Blake Converse, and Rear Admiral Dean VanderLey.)

As one of the members who sits on the Fuel Tank Advisory Committee since its inception in 2016, we haven’t been able to move the ball down the field that much… until now. The U.S. Navy has been forced to shut down the use of the underground jet fuel storage tanks after numerous complaints from families that their water smells and looks like it contains fuel. Unfortunately, it’s taken a catastrophic event to finally shut down the tanks—for how long, no one knows.

A public hearing is set for Monday, Dec. 20, 8 AM via Zoom, in which the Navy says they’ll contest the Hawai‘i Department of Health’s emergency order instructing the Navy to drain the fuel from its 20 underground Red Hill fuel tanks. (Which relates directly to my question concerning their plan if the hearing doesn’t go their way.) The fuel facility that sits mauka (toward the mountain) of Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam has long posed a risk to a major drinking water source for O'ahu and is believed to be the source of the current petroleum contamination of the Navy’s drinking water system. The public can view the proceedings live on YouTube at **www.youtube.com/c/HawaiiDOH**. Once the hearing is done, a hearing will be posted at **www.youtube.com/c/HawaiiDOH/videos.** Updates regarding live streaming will be posted at **health.hawaii.gov/navywater.** (continued, p. 3)…

DISTRICT 20 HAPPENINGS

On Nov. 10, Sen. Gabbard and staff visited the UH West O'ahu campus for a "Walk and Talk" of this beautiful, growing campus. Pictured with Chancellor Maenette Bennett.

UH West O'ahu Site Tour

My staff and I had a wonderful visit on Nov. 10 to the UH West O'ahu campus in my Senate District 20, for a "Walk and Talk" around this beautiful, expanding campus. Hard to believe it was almost 10 years ago when it first opened its doors to students in 2012…. It was so gratifying to see the growth of this awesome campus! UHWO has experienced so many exciting changes, with many more to come! To see a brief video of **highlights of our tour, click here!**

We began the tour in the Administration Building where Chancellor Maenette Benham and her amazing team (Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer, Jeff Moniz; Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Alan Rosenfeld; and Director, Institutional Research Office, John Stanley) gave us a brief overview of the UHWO: "Where We've Been, Where We Are, and Where We're Going" including admission trends…

We were escorted by Wendy Tatsuno (Government Relations for UH West O'ahu) and Ken Inouye (Executive Assistant to the Chancellor) to their beautiful, newly built amphitheater, where we met with Carrie Larger-Dir. of Admissions and Rouel Velasco, Student Life Coordinator. We saw the extraordinary focus these leaders exhibited when it came to their enthusiasm for and dedication to the students' health & well-being. They shared how the student population has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the support provided by their department. As we continued our "Campus Walk & Talk" I was amazed at all the new things there were to see and learn about since my last visit prior to the pandemic shutdown in 2020. We next met with Facilities & Planning Director, Bonnie Arakawa and James Shattuck for the "Mālama our Campus" portion of our walk & talk, where we got to view the future home of the Student Bookstore and Dining Hall Renovation, C-Building extension, Student Services Campbell Library Repairs, the East Plaza and Transit-Oriented Development Rail Station, just a 5-minute walk, adjacent to campus!

On the final stop of our tour, we were treated to the remarkable, brand new, high-tech Academy for Creative Media. This building really is the pride and joy of UHWO. I'm happy to have played a part in its completion, along with other campus improvements via our Senate CIP budget (Capital Improvement Projects) over the years… (including $35 million for the Creative Media Building and $7 million for the Admin and Allied Health Facility.) Recently completed, they haven't yet had an opportunity to unveil it to the public with a Grand Opening due to COVID. Here, we met with Director Sharla Hanaoka and a couple of the students. It's an amazing building that deserves an entire page of its own, due to all the high-tech components and incredible aspects it has to offer students interested in pursuing a career in film and creative media. I'm so proud of all UHWO has accomplished! This is one of the biggest highlights of my time in the State Senate – seeing our West O'ahu campus in Kapolei finally come to fruition, grow and thrive.

Climate Change Summit

As we get closer to the 2022 Legislative Session which begins on Jan. 19, it's typical for me to have numerous meetings with various environmental and agricultural stakeholders who request legislation. The Virtual Climate Action Forum I attended and spoke at on Dec. 4 provided the perfect venue to allow this to happen. The event was a follow-up to one held on Sept. 18 where we discussed our environmental legislative priorities. The virtual format made it so no one had to hassle with flying in from the Neighbor Islands and pay for parking downstairs, which was great. During the event, we focused on bill concepts specifically related to climate mitigation and adaptation measures. You can **view my presentation here**.

I want to mahalo all who were involved in putting this follow-up event together. Such a great idea… It just makes sense… inviting all the stakeholders to get together and talk story before session starts. We had some great speakers, including Dr. Chip Fletcher, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology (SOEST), University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and Chairperson of the Honolulu Climate Change Commission. We also heard from my counterparts in the House of Representatives, Rep. David Tarnas, and Rep. Nicole Lowen. ***(Cont. p.4)***

AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT UPDATES

On Nov. 9-11, Sen. Gabbard attended the 2021 Annual HFUU Convention in Maui. (Pictured L-R: Matt Drayer, HFUU Ka'u Chapter Pres, Sen. Gabbard, and Vincent Mina, HFUU Pres.)

Hawaiʻi Farmers Union United (HFUU) Annual Convention

I love when I get to hang out with farmers. The HFUU Annual Convention was in Maui this year at the Hale Akua Garden Farm Eco Retreat Center Dec. 9-12. It was set up as a hybrid experience so that there was a group of us there in person, where we got to have the conference experience we all remember pre-COVID, combined with a virtual component where participants, and those not in Maui, were able to tune in and listen to speakers as far away as Columbia! Speakers included: Christopher Nesbitt of Agroforestry Systems Columbia; Maui Bees Kula Farm Tour Demo with Mark & Leah Damon; Lapa'au Olinda Farm Tour Demo with Michael & Lauren Marchand; Dan Kittredge of Bio Nutrient Produce Meter; Hoku Nui Farm Tour Demo with Karin & Erik Frost; Kahanu Aina Greens Wailuku Farm Tour Demo with Vincent & Irene Mina; Ray Archuleta of 'Kiss The Ground' Movie; and the Soil Health Initiative video featuring Hawaii Taro Farm & Mahi Pono. There was time to learn and talk story and share visions for what Agriculture in Hawaiʻi could be…

Local Food Coalition

On Dec. 7, I was invited to discuss my agriculture legislative priorities for the 2022 session at the Local Food Coalition's December 2021 meeting. The Local Food Coalition is an organization comprised of farmers, ranchers, livestock producers, investors and other organizations working to provide Hawai'i's food supply. Collectively, the coalition manages more than 1 million acres of land and produces the majority of food in our state. Solving our challenge of increasing the local food supply – putting more local food on local plates – can be best accomplished by "laulima" many hands working together – bringing people and organizations together who can work on the entire food value chain in a systematic way. Coalition proposals include critical issues related to land, water, finance, energy, market development, and other key concerns that members believe will help local food gain strength. The LFC is comprised of: Hawaiʻi Farm Bureau Federation, Hawaiʻi Farmers' Union United, Hawaiʻi Food Industry Association, Hawaiʻi Food Manufacturers Association, 4 Ag Hawaiʻi, Hawaiʻi Aquaculture & Aquaponics Association, Hawaiʻi Cattlemen's Association, and the Ulupono Initiative.

(Red Hill Info Briefing, continued p. 1) For those who may be reading this outside Hawaiʻi, the Red Hill Fuel Storage Facility was built in 1943 to store extra fuel for planes, should we ever be attacked, and our resources depleted. Located near Pearl Harbor it continues to support military operations in the Pacific. The facility includes 20 massive, underground tanks, each 100 feet in diameter and 250 feet in height. The tanks have a combined storage capacity totaling approximately 250 million gallons of fuel (that's equivalent to about 380 Olympic size pools!) and are sitting 100 feet over one of our main water aquifers! In January 2014, during the course of refilling one of the tanks, an estimated 27,000 gallons of jet fuel escaped from the tank. Some say numbers could be even higher. Though the Navy reported it to the Hawaiʻi Department of Health at the time, we've since learned this wasn't the first time something like this has happened.

In response to this catastrophic release, the Navy, Defense Logistics Agency (they own the fuel), EPA, and the HDOA began negotiating an agreement known as an Administrative Order on Consent ("AOC") that established a timeframe for the Navy and Defense Logistics Agency to evaluate and remediate existing contamination to the extent practicable in the vicinity of the facility, as well as to evaluate and implement measures to prevent future releases. This legally enforceable document required the Navy and DLA to evaluate and implement structural upgrades to the tanks, implement improved leak detection technologies, evaluate and update the groundwater monitoring network and perform a risk and vulnerability assessment to determine the level of risk the facility may pose to the groundwater and drinking water aquifers in the areas surrounding the Red Hill Facility in 22 years. I introduced bills in 2016, and 2017-2020 dealing with the issue, but unfortunately, none of them passed.

On Nov. 19 Sen. Gabbard attended the Hawai'i National Guard Youth Challenge Academy Class 55 Commencement and presented the Mike Gabbard Scholarship to Kheshann Keosavanh, who will begin studies at Leeward Community College in Computer Science. (Pictured L-R: Sina Atanoa, Dir. YCA; scholarship recipient, Kheshann Keosavanh, Sen. Gabbard, and Tama Tuiteleleapaga, YCA, Dep. Dir.)

Youth Challenge Academy Class 55 Graduation

AlohaCongrats and Imua Class 55! It's always very moving to see these cadets, many who come in with troubled backgrounds, unable to make it in traditional education for whatever reason, completely turn their lives around in only 5 ½ months. For those unfamiliar, the YCA provides 16 to 19-year-old non-traditional "At-Promise" youth a second chance to obtain their high school diploma and become productive citizens within the community. During each commencement ceremony, which I've been attending twice a year since 2013, the cadets sing and perform a song, unique to them. It was heartwarming to attend their on-campus commencement in person on Nov. 19 and watch them perform this song at the end of the graduation ceremony. I thought you might enjoy reading the words to the song: "That's What Youth Challenge Is," written by graduate Wengu (Lead Singer) & Director.

No matter how hard it gets, we goin' stick through it

Keep our head up and handle it

Tomorrow we wake up with a second wind

Overcome it cause we champions

I know it seems so hard but remember one thing

Dream and Believe that you can Achieve

I see more changes

Wake up in the morning and I ask myself

Is the slack work living, should I ask for help?

Tired of being broke, even worse, I'm trapped

My soul hurts so I'm looking for a way to bounce back

The outs give a dang about a dropout

Now the challenge showed a way to make my family proud

Giving back to the kids every way we can

Gotta stay on track cause that's God's plan

That's what Youth Challenge is…..

Helping us change our ways….

That's what Youth Challenge is….

OOOOH YEAH!

As I walk out these gates

I know that'll appreciate

The better days and blessings that'll come my way

The opportunities that I won't hesitate to take

That's why we tryna make a way

Gotta give thanks to the YCA

Sticking with the program really took a lot of faith

I thank the Lord above for always giving me the strength

Now we headed to the top

This is foreal and we ain't gonna stop

Give us the courage to make it out there

Don't worry if you fall, we got people who cares

Let us give thanks to the man above and all the staff for always helping us. Let's not waste our time and go back to our old ways. Let's start a new path for our future so we can see a change!

Christmas Trees

Have you got your Christmas tree yet? Are you planning ahead on how to recycle your tree after the holidays? This can be done simply as part of your normal green waste pickup. Make sure the tree is bare (no flocking - that white, powdery mixture put on branches to make it look like snow, ornaments, or tinsel). Cut up the tree so it fits inside the can with the lid closed. If you have tinsel or flocking on the tree, you can cut it up and bag it and put it in the gray cart. If you have curbside collection, cut the tree into three-foot segments and put it out on your normal refuse day. Don't put it out with bulky trash. You can also drop off whole Christmas trees at your nearest refuse convenience center. If you miss your green, recycling, or trash pickup day, wait until the next scheduled pickup

(Climate Summit, cont. p. 2) We heard from numerous environmental organizations, who sponsored the event. The event was moderated by Ted Bohlen, a former deputy attorney general who has worked on environmental issues for many years and who's passionate about mitigating the climate emergency and protecting coral reefs and clean waters. He's also a founder of the Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition and Climate Protectors Hawai'i.