

TESTIMONY

SB 414

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

POST OFFICE BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

**Testimony of
LAURA H. THIELEN
Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committee on
WATER, LAND AGRICULTURE, AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS**

**Monday, February 2, 2009
3:15 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229**

**In consideration of
SENATE BILL 414
RELATING TO SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

Senate Bill 414 requires that one director of each soil and water conservation district appointed by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) represent the organic farming community. **The Department does not support this measure as it would limit the pool of those eligible to serve as district directors and could preclude representation of other interest groups, such as ranchers or large landowners.**

Under Chapter 180, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the governance of each Soil and Water Conservation District is placed in the hands of five volunteer directors, two of whom are appointed by the Department at the recommendation of the district and three of whom are elected by the land occupiers of the district. Therefore, through the election or appointment process, organic farmers are not excluded from serving as directors. Additionally, some districts have difficulty in filling all five volunteer positions and this measure would further limit those eligible to serve.

**LAURA H. THIELEN
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**RUSSELL Y. TSUJI
FIRST DEPUTY**

**KEN C. KAWAHARA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER**

**AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS**

Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts

Emailed Testimony

Measure: SB 414

Senate Committee on: Water, Land, Agriculture, and Hawaiian Affairs

Date of hearing: Monday February 2, 2009

Time: 3:15 PM

Conference Room 229

Subject: Testimony in opposition of SB 414

Good Afternoon Chair Hee, Vice Chair Tokuda and Senate committee members. My Name is Wes Nohara. I am the Chairman of the West Maui Soil & Water Conservation District and Legislative Committee Chair for the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts (HACD).

I am here testifying for HACD in opposition of SB 414. This bill if passed will require each district to have one of its appointed members to specifically represent the organic farming community. We feel this requirement is unnecessary, it is too restrictive and would hurt our ability to keep and recruit new directors.

The following points are submitted to support our stance:

- The Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) of Hawaii are open to any and all members of our community (including organic interests) who have an interest to serve on our boards. However they must live or work in that district.
- Currently many of our districts already have representation from the organic farming community (along with ranching, large landowners, small diversified farms etc...).
- The SWCDs of Hawaii struggle to find people willing to serve on our boards. We serve not only agriculture, but assist in areas of water quality, environmental improvement, public safety, conservation education, and more... We feel that by limiting one of our board positions to organic farming, it would hurt our ability to recruit and keep the best talented board members. By specifying organic representation, it could lead to others groups to require mandated representation well.
- Our meetings are all open to the public. Anyone can join our meetings and add their interests and concerns. We also have Associate Members of our boards who

can contribute, learn the process, but not vote. We encourage people who are new to SWCD to start as Associate Members.

In short, the HACD is opposed to SB 414. We feel that this bill would be detrimental to our ability to operate, recruit and keep as strong and functional board. For these reasons we ask that you not pass SB414.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Wesley Nohara
Legislative Committee Chair
HACD

Testimony

Senate Water, Land, Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs Committee

RE: SB414: Relating to Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Chair Hee and Members of the Committee:

Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation on behalf of its farm and ranch families and organizations across the State stands **opposed** to SB414 dictating one of the appointees on each of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Current appointments on the Soil and Water Conservation Districts take into consideration the qualifications of the individual to serve the needs of the community. The SWCDs have its' origins in agriculture and have as core values, the stewardship of natural resources. No matter what form of agriculture, the prime objective--the protection and conservation of our natural resources-- is a common goal. It is illogical to look to use of the resource without addressing long term sustainability since the industry is dependent upon the natural resources. Without them, the industry could not exist. This measure specifically looks at one type of agriculture. The existing process already takes it into account making this measure unnecessary.

We respectfully urge your opposition to this measure. Thank you for this opportunity to provide our comment on this matter.

TESTIMONY

SB 414

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