SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF EACH COUNTY TO DESIGNATE AND ESTABLISH ADDITIONAL VOTER SERVICE CENTERS AT APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS FOR THE 2020 ELECTIONS.

WHEREAS, in 2019, Hawaii adopted Act 136, Session Laws of Hawaii 2019, requiring all elections statewide to be conducted by mail beginning with the 2020 primary election; and

WHEREAS, since the 2020 primary election will be the first election in which the majority of Hawaii's voters will be sent ballots to vote by mail, many voters will likely have questions about the process, want to turn in their ballots in person, or want to register and vote on the same day; and

WHEREAS, the new vote-by-mail law provides that the Voter Service Centers (VSC) will be open for a limited amount of time from the tenth business day preceding an election through the day of the election to receive personal delivery of mail-in ballots, accommodate voters with special needs, offer same day registration and voting, address any problems that may arise from the inaugural implementation of the brand-new voting system, and provide other voting-related services; and

WHEREAS, since a brand-new voting system will be in place, it is reasonable to anticipate that issues may arise, including voters not receiving their ballots in the mail or receiving their ballots too late to return the ballots by mail in time for their votes to be counted; and

WHEREAS, it is of utmost importance that the State and each county are prepared to promptly address any issues that arise so that voters are not disenfranchised and election results are not questioned or legally challenged; and

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WHEREAS, having an insufficient number of VSCs open for a limited period of time to resolve issues may result in voter disenfranchisement and challenges to the election results; and

WHEREAS, limited access to VSCs has a greater impact to those voters living in rural areas who may have to drive far distances to exercise their right to vote, may need to ask questions about the vote-by-mail process, or may need to resolve other issues that arise due to no fault of their own; and

WHEREAS, the Offices of the Clerk of the counties have indicated that there will be a total of only eight voter service centers statewide for the first vote-by-mail election year as follows:

(1) One VSC for the County of Kauai located in Lihue, on the island of Kauai;

(2) Three VSCs for the County of Maui, one of each located on the island of Maui, island of Molokai, and island of Lanai;

(3) Two VSCs for the County of Hawaii, one of each located in Hilo and Kailua-Kona; and

(4) Two VSCs for the City and County of Honolulu, one of each located at Honolulu Hale in Honolulu and Kapolei Hale located in Kapolei; and

WHEREAS, having only eight VSCs open for just a short time before the 2020 primary and general elections is insufficient to resolve potential issues and greatly inhibits voters' access to information and resources, inhibits their ability to cast their ballots, and may deter election participation rather than bolster it; and

WHEREAS, section 11-109, Hawaii Revised Statutes, provides that the Office of the Clerk of a county may designate and establish additional locations for VSCs to service the particular needs of a county's voters; and
WHEREAS, the public's trust and confidence in elections provides the basis for a healthy election system and a robust democracy, and for the initial implementation of the new vote-by-mail balloting system, the State should have a strong foundation in place to ensure the election and voting process is fair and reasonable; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirtieth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2020, the House of Representatives concurring, that the Office of the Clerk of each county is requested to designate and establish additional voter service centers at appropriate locations for the 2020 elections based upon the particular needs of the county's voters; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in designating and establishing additional VSCs, consideration be given to the use of state libraries and other state or county locations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that consideration be given to staffing the VSCs with trained volunteers from non-partisan civic organizations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Chief Election Officer, Mayor and Office of the Clerk of the City and County of Honolulu, Mayor and Office of the Clerk of the County of Hawaii, Mayor and Office of the Clerk of the County of Maui, and Mayor and Office of the Clerk of the County of Kauai.

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OFFERED BY: D. KU