

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Senator Laura Thielen

DISTRICT 25: KAILUA - WAIMANALO - HAWAI'I KAI

September 2017



*Aloha
Kailua!*

The legislature has passed SB4 to fund Rail in last week's Special Session.

I spoke out against extending any more funding for Rail because the City has not shown us (1) what the total construction cost will be, and (2) that they have changed their oversight and will now be able to manage those costs.

As always, please feel free to contact my office at 587-8388 if I can provide assistance.

Mahalo,

Laura

KAILUA ELEMENTARY IS OPENING A PRE-K CLASS

The Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) launched Hawaii's first publicly funded pre-k program in 2014. Currently, 21 pre-k classrooms on 19 DOE campuses statewide constitute Hawaii's pre-k program.

EOEL has selected five new schools to open pre-k classes in the 2018-19 school year, based on a competitive application process. We are proud to have Kailua Elementary as one of them!

Suicide Prevention Month

September is suicide prevention month; a time to raise awareness of this public health issue:

- * There are 2.5 times as many deaths from suicide yearly than from homicide.
- * From 2007 to 2014, rates of deaths due to suicide among children ages 10-14 more than doubled, according to data from the CDC.

Anxiety and depression are cited as the leading cause of suicide. These are medical illnesses that can be treated. For more information go to The Blue Gardenia Foundation website at <http://thebgf.wix.com/tbqf>

HAWAII DATA BOOK

The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) released the 2016 edition of the "State of Hawaii Data Book."

The book is a great resource and is available on the DBEDT website at: dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/databook/.

Some of the interesting data in this newest edition show that:

- ⇒ The top five places of birth for the foreign-born population in our state were the Philippines, Japan, China (excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan), Korea and Vietnam based on data from 2011 to 2015.
- ⇒ California was the top state of in-migrants (about 10,950) to Hawaii and out-migrants (about 10,500) from HI in 2015.
- ⇒ In 2015, more than half of the 7,500 licensed beds in state-approved facilities were in long-term care facilities, while the remainder of the beds were in acute care and specialty care facilities.
- ⇒ The enrollment at the UH dropped in 2016. Total enrollment at UH campuses was 53,418; a 4.2 percent decrease from 2015, and the lowest total enrollment since 2007.
- ⇒ In 2015, about 1 out of 6 people arrested for an index offense (such as murder, rape, robbery, theft) was a juvenile.



HOW DO YOU WRITE A BILL?

“If you want to travel fast, go alone. If you want to travel far, go together.”

Earlier this year people asked how do we know what to put in a bill. I promised to write about how we’re putting together bills in preparation for next session.

I started thinking about what aspects of our society’s behavior has changed for the better – smoking; seatbelts; and drunk driving. Watch an episode of Mad Men, and – if you’re old enough – you’re shocked at how common these things were.

In contrast, I looked at what aspects of our society has **not** changed; and according to reports and statistics there has been no real change in behavior surrounding domestic violence, despite changes in laws.

It’s a complicated problem, and I’m not an expert. But it seems clear we need to try something different. So the Women’s Legislative Caucus (I’m one of the four co-conveners) decided to start with the Attorney General’s Office, because they are the lead law enforcement agency for the state. In addition, they funnel to the counties all the federal funds and grants relating to domestic violence and victim support services.

Our AG, a former prosecutor, immediately agreed to co-sponsor discussions with the counties and judiciary to see if we could develop strategies that would lead to a reduction in domestic violence.

Next we asked the Judiciary, another branch of the state, to join the effort. The Chief Justice is also supportive, provided that when we meet with them, we understand that the judiciary is not an advocate, must remain neutral, and can only meet if both prosecutor and public defenders are at the table.

We then brought in the advocates to assist in outlining a draft strategy. Next we will set up meetings in each of the four counties with the AG, courts, police departments, prosecutors, public defenders and advocates .

I don’t have a particular solution in mind. All I want is to focus on the overall system of how we’re handling domestic violence incidents, and figure out what we can do within the criminal justice system to see a reduction in violence within families.

I know much of the problem has to be addressed outside of the judicial system. But certainly, this system has a big role to play as well.

There’s no guarantee the group will reach agreement on anything. But there is no chance of changing behavior unless we travel together.

I’ll share the ideas that come out of the discussions. We welcome ideas from readers as well.



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