Dear Neighbor,

This has been a more cooperative Legislative Session as we worked together under inter-government solutions for the growing home- less population and funded the Department of Education so that it can "cool our schools." We also pushed for ways to help meet Hawaii’s clean-energy target of 100 percent electricity through renewable-energy sources by 2045 and fought the State’s largest health insurer's attempt to restrict medical specialists from getting critical imaging tests for patients.

In a unanimous vote, the bill to extend and expand the industrial hemp crop beyond Oahu's former research site passed. It is the most successful hemp bill in our state and while there is room for improvements, such as lifting cumbersome restrictions, it allows even our small farmers on all islands to grow the multisize crop. It's a start and I thank you for your years-long support on this issue.

As we close this Session, I will continue to work on issues during the interim, and look forward to seeing you in our community.

Mahalo for the honor of serving you.

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**In My Opinion**

**Cooling the Schools for our Keiki**

The big news is that more than 1,000 more classrooms will be comfortable and cool by the end of this year. Spiking classroom temperatures spurred private, volunteer, and public sectors to join forces in taking the swelter out of schools.

The Hawaii Medical Service Association is tying the hands of doctors by revoking their preapproval to order advanced imaging tests. More students and schools than ever — 345 from seven of our District's schools — signed up for our annual Legislative Roadshow, taking the opportunity to experience the Legislative process in front of elected officials and our staffs.

Students participate in the 2016 Legislative Roadshow, testifying for and against various House and Senate bills.

### Cooling the Schools for our Keiki

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A special mahalo goes out to RevoluSun who recently donated an off-grid air conditioner cools a 500 square foot classroom and a storage battery that represents the leading edge in energy technology. This solar air conditioner cools a 500 square foot classroom and a storage battery that provides backup in case the sun is not shining. The unit is off-grid and separate from the classroom's existing electrical infrastructure. We look forward to seeing more off grid air conditioning systems used as part of the DOE's heat abatement project. Saving energy and money, while providing our students and their teachers a comfortable learning environment is a win for everyone!

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**Delaying Medical Tests To Save Money Is A Dangerous Game**

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Elementary, middle and high school students researched age-appropriate House and Senate bills that were specifically chosen for them and then testified in front of our mock Legislative Committee. At each of the Windward schools, we engaged with them, listened to their reasoning for supporting or opposing the bills, and asked follow-up questions that led to more thought and discussion.

Among the bills' topics were legislation about honeybees and insects; fireworks; forbidding pedestrians from crossing a street while using cell phones; and industrial hemp.

“If the pesticides that farmers are using kill the bees, then people would have to genetically modify our fruits and vegetables,” one student testified in concern. “Without honeybees, we’d have a hard time sustaining the 7 billion people in the world,” another student stated. “I urge you to pass this bill.”

And in a letter sent to our office, a student wrote, “Thank you so much for giving me an experience of government with the Legislative Roadshow. I’ve learned how hard it is to pass a bill. The fact that you do this as a daily job is frightening. . . . But it was very fun and I had a great time!”
You spoke we listened!

2016 brought our highest-ever number of Legislative Survey responses, giving us valuable insight into the concerns and issues that you face in our 50th District, and insightful suggestions, too. Here’s a recap.

Your answers to Question #1 revealed that Hawaii’s own farmers and ranchers have the loyal support of our District’s majority, who buy “local” every time they grocery shop. The second greatest number of people at least buy local-raised food occasionally.

Earlier this year, the Powerball jackpot of $1.5 billion had our nation talking. The responses to Question 2 indicate a near tie with about half opposing a lottery in Hawaii and half favoring it. I oppose opening Hawaii’s doors to gambling because data from other lottery states show many problems result from that industry.

Keeping residents safe is a priority and I agree with the greater number, who prefer multi-tactic notifications — radio, TV, social media and beach signage — to alert people about brown water in our areas. I have urged City and State emergency services to implement these methods simultaneously.

The topic of taxes elicited many replies with most respondents saying that they do not support an increase in the General Excise Tax that is tied to monies going toward the Hawaii public school system. I am against increasing the GET for any reason because our residents already bear the burden of paying the highest taxes in the nation.

Speaking of high-level matters, Hawaii’s #1 issue in 2016 is homelessness and only nine votes in our survey separated the two most popular answers for solutions. Most people want to see nontraditional, energy-efficient and eco-conscious housing like micro homes built on underused state and city lands. A slightly smaller group wants the City to move the homeless out of Kailua’s business and residential areas. I have met with Governor Ige and proposed affordable carbon-neutral cabin material for State projects.

Of seemingly less concern to most survey respondents are the wild chickens that roam our District. The smaller group that is concerned thinks that the City should appoint a person to handle complaints.

There was also great consensus about the level of dissatisfaction with the Hawaii Department of Education’s pace, when it comes to cooling the temperature in our classrooms, which have reached the 90-degree range in some instances and that continue to get hotter. I wholeheartedly agree. As such, I’ve worked with a local solar company that has agreed to donate a “stand-alone” photovoltaic system and battery backup for one of Kalaheo High’s hottest classrooms to show the DOE that such technology can work independent of the electric grid.

In another question related to the DOE, the majority wants the organization to present more details including firm implementation dates for cooling schools; meet with the Kalaheo District community; and do timely online postings that specify how the public can help. I have urged the DOE to take these actions.

The question that captured the most attention and agreement was about drones. We saw an overwhelming response to banish them from flying over residential areas to preserve people’s safety and privacy. I strongly agree. Unfortunately and partly due to the newness of consumer aerial vehicles, legislation throughout the U.S. has stalled and no federal agency is clearly in charge of developing a universal strategy to regulate drones.

Our last question revealed that most respondents drive on the Kapa‘a Quarry Road weekly. The next largest group thinks that the road is too dangerous for driving. In my meetings with City representatives, I have spoken personally to the Design and Construction Division Chief, stressing the importance of starting upgrades and repairs immediately.

Mahalo for setting aside time to complete our survey. Your responses are important as I strive to continuously represent your concerns and needs in our community and state.

Kupuna & the Care Act

A top priority for our kupuna this session was successfully passing the “Care Act”. The Care Act, or HB 2252, requires that all in-hospital patients have the chance to choose a caregiver, who will be involved with and given professional help with aftercare.

This Legislation provides much-needed support by requiring the notification of the designated caregiver before the patient’s release, and by including the patient and the caregiver in the discharge-planning process. Often times, family members and close friends are the people who serve as caregivers.

Also critical, this bill ensures that the patient and caretaker are given a consistent level of instruction and support before discharge so that the patient’s transition from the hospital to a new setting goes more smoothly for everyone.

This measure is particularly relevant to Hawaii’s residents because in recent years, it was estimated that our State had the highest percentage of residents aged 85 years and older. This percentage is expected to grow and these individuals are most likely to need long-term support and services.

It’s hempening

On the coattails of last year’s very successful industrial hemp research project, this session Legislators passed SB2659 which significantly expands Hawaii’s hemp program from one to multiple growing sites. The University of Hawaii’s first test plot in Waimanalo indicated that hemp grew quickly (12 feet in 10 weeks), needed no fertilizers, pesticides, and little water. Normally considered a seasonal crop, three hemp harvests a year could be grown in our State’s tropical climate.

Although there are specific requirements for those applying for licensing, this new law allows local farmers to experiment with growing hemp in a variety of locations and environments. Marketing and industry development, which includes identification of actual or potential hemp products, processors, product manufacturers, wholesalers, retailer and targeted consumers, will also be implemented.

The State Department of Agriculture will oversee the pilot program and develop licensing rules and administrative procedures to ensure law requirements are fulfilled. It has been a long road, but a journey well worth the time and effort!
The 2016 Legislature passed bills to address the humanitarian crisis that Hawaii faces: Homelessness ranks as the #1 issue in our State government; it is deemed the worst in the U.S.; and we have 487 homeless persons for every 100,000 people. Related issues include limited land space, increasing crime, skyrocketing housing prices and the rising cost of living.

Here are the bills that passed this session, in addition to the $12,000,000 in open funding requested by the Governor:

**SB2570** - Establishes a three-year Work for a Day Pilot Program to be administered by the City and County of Honolulu that provides homeless individuals with work opportunities.

**SB2599** - Establishes minimum requirements for emergency shelters.

**SB2647** - Establishes penalties and strengthens enforcement for sex trafficking crimes, especially when the victim is a minor.

**SB2537** requires the Department of Health to submit annual reports to the Legislature relating to child and maternal deaths and death reviews in the State. Requires, upon written request from the Director of Health, all providers of health care or social services and county and state agencies to disclose child death review information and to provide information or other materials relating to the condition and treatment of any person to the Department of Health, or its designee, for studies to reduce morbidity or mortality.

**SB2317** requires that insurance companies cover reimbursements for a 12 month period of contraceptive supplies.

**SB2560** - Requires and appropriates funds for the Dept. of Health to provide treatment and care for homeless individuals with serious and persistent mental health challenges as a part of its comprehensive mental health system.

**SB2561** - Establishes a goal of developing or vesting the development of at least 22,500 affordable rental housing units ready for occupancy between 1/1/7 and 12/31/26.

**HB1902** establishes penalties and strengthens enforcement for sex trafficking crimes, especially when the victim is a minor.

**HB1897** ensures that all insurers in the State, including health benefits plans under chapter 87A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, provide insurance coverage for sexually transmitted disease screenings.

**SB3110** provides for DBEDT grants to businesses with a Federal Small Business Innovation Research Phase II or III Awards. These grants will be available through 2017.

**SB2550** promotes the Department of Agriculture’s existing Made in Hawaii Brand Program. Managing, enforcing and promoting the Made in Hawaii Brand is critical for success to Hawaii’s manufacturing industry. This legislation will increase awareness about products which are truly “made in Hawaii”.

**HB1874** - Appropriates funds to the Dept. of Human Services and Office of Youth Services for additional outreach to homeless individuals and families, and homeless unaccompanied youth.

**HB2244** - Makes appropriations to fund and support various housing programs.

**HR26-67** - Establishes a three-year Work for a Day Pilot Program to be administered by the City and County of Honolulu that provides homeless individuals with work opportunities.

**SB2570** - Requires the Dept. of Human Services to establish a rapid re-housing assistance program to move homeless families or individuals into permanent housing as quickly as possible and achieve stability in that housing. Requires the program to be designed and operated to qualify for federal emergency shelter grants.

**SB2559** - Establishes a goal of developing or vesting the development of at least 22,500 affordable rental housing units ready for occupancy between 1/1/7 and 12/31/26.

**SB2647** - Establishes penalties and strengthens enforcement for sex trafficking crimes, especially when the victim is a minor.

**SB2599** - Establishes minimum requirements for emergency shelters.

The Women’s Legislative Caucus again introduced a number of important bills to improve the status of women in our community. This bipartisan Caucus, has existed for over 20 years, most of which Representative Thielen has been a member. Following are some of the Caucus bills which passed this session:

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Net Zero Energy for a Secure Future

Congratulations to Marine Corps Base Hawaii for committing to a Net Zero Energy policy and making significant progress in reducing its carbon footprint. “Net Zero” means that the energy produced onsite over the period of a given year is equal to the installation’s energy demand.

A recent Defense Science Board report indicated that critical military missions are at a high failure risk in the event of an electric grid failure. Development of on-site renewable energy supplies reduce this risk, and also contribute to the improved security of the local energy supply.

Using wind, sun, waves, and implementing proactive energy efficiency programs, MCBH clearly is moving towards its goal of achieving a 96 percent site energy reduction and a 99 percent source energy reduction. By achieving this status, MCBH will set an example for other military installations, provide environmental benefits, reduce costs, increase energy security, and exceed its goals and mandates.

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