

# Primary shows Kihei, Lanai residents want new leadership

## THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



In two County Council races — for the South Maui and Lanai seats, whose past

council members are rerunning for office — the primary election results show that residents in those districts desire new leadership.

For the South Maui seat, candidate Don Couch won more votes than ex-Council Member Wayne Nishiki at South Maui polls.

Misgivings about Nishiki's past performance and/or lack of performance continue. Comments arise about his prior actions to delay decisions and hold matters by not scheduling items, keeping them from being debated and discussed.

There are also reports of his refusal to meet with particular organizations and an unwillingness to be open to hearing

all sides. Many remember the seeming lack of preparation, long diatribes and drawn-out discussions that often were viewed as filibustering in Chambers. Some feel council efficiency was at an extreme low when Nishiki was in office and that it was unfair to the other members who served during that time.

In stark contrast, Don Couch, who has had both a radio show and a program on Akaku Maui Community Television, has worked to give the community a voice, hear all sides of issues, and move important community issues positively forward. South Maui seeks that kind of leadership and put its confidence behind Don Couch in the primary.

For the Lanai seat, previous Council Member Sol Kaho'ohalahala came in fourth on Lanai island in a race that included five candidates. Since then, there have been challenges to his Lanai City residency, with a fourth challenge filed this week with the Maui County Clerk's Office. At question is

whether Kaho'ohalahala, an instructor/facilitator at Maui Community College, in fact resides at his family home in Lanai City or on Maui with his wife in a Lahaina home.

In a Maui News article, Kaho'ohalahala indicated he would respond to the residency challenges after reviewing the Hawaii Revised Statutes and identifying where "the actual challenges" are.

While all nine County Council members are elected "at-large" by registered voters in Maui County, they run for a "residency district" seat and are to live in the district from which they are running when they file as a candidate in July.

The County Clerk's Office is reviewing the matter and requesting proof of residency. Given Kaho'ohalahala's reported Maui employment, it would seem work and travel records could solve the issue quickly.

The residency challenges also prompt the question of how we define a residence. It will be interesting to see how the

county clerk rules, based on the Hawaii Revised Statutes-related findings. However, Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines residence as:

*1 a: the act or fact of dwelling in a place for some time, b: the act or fact of living or regularly staying at or in some place for the discharge of a duty or the enjoyment of a benefit; 2 a (1): the place where one actually lives as distinguished from one's domicile or a place of temporary sojourn, (2): domicile; 2 a b: the place where a corporation is actually or officially established, c: the status of a legal resident; 3 a: a building used as a home: dwelling, b: housing or a unit of housing provided for students; 4 a: the period or duration of abode in a place, b: a period of active and*

*especially full-time study, research, or teaching at a college or university. — in residence: engaged to live and work at a particular place often for a specified time.*

According to The Maui News, Kaho'ohalahala told them in an interview, "I have to come to Maui to do work," but said he has done so without relinquishing his status as a Lanai resident, adding, "I have not been home on Lanai in the last three years."

While his words are inconsistent with the definition above, the people of Lanai were clear: They want other representation.

Kaho'ohalahala will be running against John Ornellas in the Nov. 4 general election.

Right now, people are feeling very boxed in by our eco-

nomic situation. Not wanting to be "stuck," they continually are working and exploring new options to move Maui forward. This effort must extend to the polls.

There is too much to get done these days to simply put on a show. We need people in office who will adopt a sustainable model that includes the economy, environment and social well-being, and will keep Maui no ka oi.

That is why the Maui Chamber of Commerce endorses Don Couch for South Maui and John Ornellas for Lanai. We believe they will make a positive difference and ask for your support of these candidates Nov. 4.

■ Pamela Tumpap is president of the Maui Chamber of Commerce.