

Scorecard draws strong reactions

THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



The Maui Chamber of Commerce's legislative scorecard, created by the chamber's Maui

Political Action Committee and published in our winter "Connections" newsletter, has drawn strong reactions by several Maui County Council members who did not receive great scores.

They have expressed concerns not to the chamber directly, but through our ex-officio, nonvoting, nonprofit board members. Their concerns with the chamber's scorecard have been tied to funding for these nonprofits. This is outrageous and is exactly why the scorecard was initiated — to hold elected officials accountable.

The chamber endorses candidates and rates elected officials to inform its members and the public on the extent to

which their voting records support business and community issues important to the chamber's membership.

After reviewing the performance of elected officials in 2007 and 2008, our scorecard was published to show how well actions by council members and state lawmakers advance the chamber's legislative agenda.

Following a review of their voting records, we asked elected officials to provide us with a written report on what they had done to address chamber issues. They were informed when we requested this written response that the chamber views communication from them as an indication of how business-friendly the official is and that a lack of response would indicate to us that he or she is unwilling to hear business issues or share their accomplishments with the business sector or public.

Not all council members provided a written response. However, every Maui County member of the state House responded, and state Sen. Roz

Baker prepared the response for the Senate delegation, noting that the senators vote together as a team.

The chamber also took into consideration elected officials' interest in and willingness to meet with the chamber over time and hear its views, as well as their participation in chamber events.

Initially the scorecard subcommittee members felt that they could present a report based solely on how elected officials voted on particular issues, but they soon realized that more of a narrative was needed to show why scores were given to elected officials. Subcommittee members noted that some may consider a narrative too subjective. However, there are a lot of nuances to be shared, and panel members determined that the narrative approach was the best way to communicate the rationale for scorecard marks. In determining the scores, evidentiary support was used, along with each official's own report, as well as the officials' ongoing dialogue and interaction with the Maui

Chamber of Commerce. Rather than an "A" through "F" type grade, the chamber political action committee elected to go with a plus sign for a positive rating, a check sign for a neutral one and a minus sign for a negative rating.

We understand that not all elected officials will agree with committee's scorecard and their scores. However, it's shameful for any official to suggest that funding might be negatively affected for the agency of a nonvoting, nonprofit member of the chamber's board. Such members don't vote on the scorecard.

Our nonprofits should be funded for the excellent and much-needed work they do and the results they provide. Any council member or elected official who has threatened or insinuated a funding threat as a result of the scorecard needs reminding that they are public servants and that this is America, where we have the freedom to express the chamber's view.

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