

# New year an opportunity for isles to act

## THE CHAMBER VIEW by Pamela Tumpap



It is a new year, and with it comes renewed enthusiasm for creating the business, economy,

government and quality of life we want to have. It is a time for revisioning, innovation, reinvention and hard work to shift from the current paradigm to a more constructive, lucrative and sustainable future. It will take great leaders, ideas and action to make it happen, but this is the year! And, your help is needed!

Why the call to action when so many of us are leaner, with fewer employees, and are struggling just to survive? Well, there is that old adage, "If not now, when?" which is certainly relevant but not the response. The reason is because we already know this is going to be a tough year. Many businesses barely are hanging on and cannot endure increased regulation or higher costs right now. But many elected officials are contemplating the latter instead of considering streamlining and reducing the cost of government.

A massive effort must to be

mounted to make way for businesses, keep them alive, let them grow and create jobs, and make Hawaii more "business friendly." We also have to get back to a level of government that we can afford, and privatize services.

And, this year there are two enormous known and distinct opportunities to make a difference and bring about positive change — the legislative session and the November elections. Not making the most of these chances would be foolish. Moreover, letting these opportunities ride would be gambling our future, and ultimately could destroy some businesses and leave our economy lingering in a slump or declining further.

The call to action is clear . . . Increased business involvement in the legislative process and electing "business friendly" representatives are required.

This legislative session, we need more businesspeople saying, "Yes," on initiatives that improve business and economic conditions; and shouting, "No," from every corner and rooftop on legislation that hurts and will slow our economic recovery and growth. We in the business sector cannot sit idly by and hope for the best. We must engage actively in the legislative process to prevent

further crushing blows and to make constructive transformations.

The work starts again right now, and sustained participation for the state legislative session is called for through May. On a county level, it is a year-round process. You can help by explaining to legislators what your business faces, what you have had to risk to provide employment for yourself and others, and how proposed legislation will assist or hinder your business; by asking them how they will vote on legislative issues that are significant to you; and by holding them accountable. You can aid Maui Chamber of Commerce efforts by sharing this information with us; joining the team that will provide testimony by phone, fax or e-mail; testifying in person; calling legislators; writing letters to the editor, etc.

Taking part in the November elections is also necessary, including encouraging the public and one's employees to vote; seeking "business friendly" candidates, and vigorously supporting "business friendly" candidates through contributions and volunteer efforts. It is important for us to find and help like-minded candidates, who understand economics and the issues businesses face and who have a mutual agenda.

We want elected officials who will put aside "politics"; and, instead, strive to revamp government, build up the economy and create a supportive business environment where opportunities and jobs abound.

We know the activities mentioned above take time, money and other resources when many of us already do more with less; however, these are occasions when an extra investment is needed to create systems that work.

The Maui Chamber of Commerce remains here to identify and overcome obstacles that are detrimental to the business climate and community growth. We see this year's legislative session and the coming elections as vital points where we can influence legislation, effect meaningful change and make crucial strides forward. Individually, each of us can have a bigger impact by getting more involved on any level. But collectively, engaging our immense work force, we can move mountains. We are mobilizing people to address both fronts and ask that you join us. This is the year; now is the time. Please give us a call at 871-7711 or send an e-mail to [info@mauichamber.com](mailto:info@mauichamber.com).

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