

Legislative scorecard available

THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



Legislative advocacy and holding elected officials accountable for their votes on priority business

issues are top priorities for Maui Chamber of Commerce members. Each year we advocate on their behalf, as well as the broader business sector, representing the voice of business in the legislative process.

The legislative process is a long and lengthy process that is briefly shared here. Bills are introduced by legislators to be heard. They are often introduced in both the House and Senate as a strategy to give the measure a better chance of being passed. HB stands for House Bill and SB stands for Senate Bill. After first reading, bills are referred to committees in the respective house they were introduced in, where amendments can be made.

For bills to move forward, they must pass second and third reading in the house where they were introduced. If they do, they are then sent to the other house for its review, known as crossover, where the Senate reviews House bills and the House reviews Senate bills. Bills that pass final reading in both the House and Senate are certified and sent on to the governor for her review, where she

can sign them into law, leave them unsigned but allow them to become law, or veto them. The Legislature then has an opportunity to override any bills vetoed by the governor.

This is a very simple overview and there is much more to the process. For the Citizen's Guide, which well explains the full legislative process and how a bill becomes law, visit www.capitol.hawaii.gov/site1/info/2009CitizensGuide.pdf.

This session 3,523 bills were introduced, with another 2,037 amendments for those bills later introduced (according to HawaiiVotes.org). The chamber scans bills to identify those that are important to the business sector, creates a list of key issues for bill tracking and distills this down to the top priorities the chamber will focus on each session.

Post-session, we publish a State Legislative Scorecard to let our members and the public know how our state representatives and senators voted on bills that were a priority for our chamber and hold those elected officials accountable for their votes. That 2009 State Legislative Scorecard is now available on the chamber's Web site at www.mauichamber.com.

It includes the priority bills that we were deeply concerned with and provided continuous advocacy and education on throughout the session along with chambers across the state, given their impact on business. It is not an exhaustive list of all

of the bills that we testified on, but instead our top priorities and a few new bills on county funding and visitor industry support – matters of extreme importance in these economic times.

Included in the scorecard on our Web site are the descriptions of the following bills, our position on each bill (also shown here), brief highlights of comments provided to the Legislature on why we supported or opposed the bill, a chart that indicates how our elected officials voted on each bill, and the bill's status.

- Workers' Compensation: HB 602 - supported; HB 1279 - opposed; SB 63 - opposed; SB 695 - opposed, law passed.

- Workers' Compensation Independent Medical Examination (IME): HB 1288 - opposed; SB 62 - opposed.

- Family Leave: HB 982 - opposed, law passed.

- Successor Employer: HB 396 - opposed; SB 688 - opposed; SB 1622 - opposed.

- Card Check Bill: HB 952 - opposed, law passed; SB 1621 - opposed.

- General Excise Tax Increase: SB 1346 - opposed.

- Suspend Transient Accommodations Tax (TAT) from Counties for 6 Years: HB 1744 - opposed.

- Visitor Industry: HB 1204 Relating to Tourism Special Fund - supported; SB 1226 Tourism Special Fund - comments provided; HB 1763 Relating to HTA Repeal - opposed; HB 960 & SB 271 Re-

lating to Tourism Emergency - supported; SB 1111 TAT Tax Increase - opposed, law passed.

One hundred and seventy-one new laws were passed this legislative session, including several that we warned would increase the cost of doing business and/or hinder economic recovery. Businesses are not looking for a handout. They simply want fair and equitable solutions and no additional regulation or cost increases that detract from growth and economic revitalizations, especially given these challenging times.

If you, like our members, feel it is important to hold elected officials accountable, we encourage you to know where they stand on issues important to you and to remember how they voted at election time when choosing who to vote for. Together, we can make a difference.

To learn more, visit: www.capitol.hawaii.gov/ for information on the House and Senate, legislators, committees, bill tracking, and more;

www.hawaiivotes.org for descriptions of bills, voting records, discussions on bills, citizen blogs, etc.;

<http://hawaii.gov/gov/leg/session-2009/legislative-results> for bills signed into law by Gov. Linda Lingle this past legislative session and her veto messages; and www.mauichamber.com for our full 2009 Legislative Scorecard report.

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