



KA 'AHA KENEOA

THE SENATE

KE KAPIKALA (STATE CAPITOL)

HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

NEWS RELEASE

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HAWAII SENATE MAJORITY OUTLINES PRIORITIES FOR THE UPCOMING 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

HONOLULU – The Hawaii Senate Majority today announced their legislative priorities in advance of the Hawaii State Legislature's Opening Day on Wednesday, January 15.

“As we prepare for the 2025 Legislative Session, the Senate Majority is committed in its mission to collaborate with our Senate Minority and House of Representatives colleagues to forge a stronger, more resilient future for Hawaii,” said Senate Majority Leader Dru Mamo Kanuha (District 3 - Kona, Ka’ū, and Volcano). “Our unwavering focus is on delivering impactful policies that uplift our communities, fortify our economy, and protect Hawaii's rich agricultural innovations and unparalleled natural resources. This session is a call to action and we are committed to shaping a brighter, more prosperous future for every resident of our state.”

The Senate Majority has identified the following priorities as areas of focus for this year:

Education and Workforce Development

The Senate remains committed to expanding education and employment opportunities. The upcoming session will address issues such as improving public school infrastructure; advancing technology integration across campuses; aligning curriculum to workforce needs; supporting career and technical education (CTE); and boosting student test performance. The Senate will also focus on the agriculture, construction, and healthcare industries, with proposals to consider establishing a regional kitchen program; promoting apprenticeships through preferential consideration in public project development; and increasing funding for nursing programs and certifications.

The Senate will also consider proposals to improve teacher and staff retention, focusing on creating pathways for academic and professional development; incentivizing the development of workforce housing—particularly for teachers and agricultural workers; reforming the state hiring process to fill critical job vacancies and enhance workforce capacity; and addressing longtime challenges at the University of Hawai'i, including student housing shortages, the need for revenue-generating programs, and improvements to the athletics department.

Housing, Homelessness, and Stabilizing Hawai'i's Property Insurance Market

The Senate will continue to address the state's housing crisis by considering proposals that streamline housing approvals and provide funding for housing infrastructure across the islands; focusing on advancing affordable housing initiatives, including dedicated housing for kupuna, while addressing community concerns related to housing development projects; and improving state infrastructure through public-private partnerships and fast-tracking community-based projects. Efforts to address homelessness will focus on increasing support for mental health services; expanding the work of the "End Homelessness Group" (EHG); advancing key initiatives such as establishing a permanent Community Outreach Court; expanding access to detox programs; and securing continued funding for the "Return-to-Home" program to assist homeless individuals in returning to their home states.

A key focus of the Senate in 2025 is stabilizing Hawai'i's property insurance market by providing homeowners with better access to hurricane and property insurance, and assisting condominium owners in exploring ways to address deferred maintenance and increasing costs of property insurance.

General Governance and Constitutional Rights

The Senate remains committed to improving government processes by enhancing legislative efficiency, including revisiting laws governing legislative vacancies to streamline and strengthen the election process; encouraging coordination among nonprofits for grant distribution; addressing business losses due to theft; reforming state biosecurity programs to better protect Hawai'i's unique ecosystems and agricultural industries from invasive species and pests; improving disaster preparedness—especially for wildfires; and enhancing planning efforts for vulnerable areas to increase resilience.

Additionally, the Senate remains committed to safeguarding reproductive rights and legal immigration rights for all residents of Hawai'i.

Environmental Sustainability and Infrastructure

The Senate will continue to prioritize improving environmental sustainability through the increased use of recycled water and improvements in water infrastructure; improving the Commission on Water Resource Management (CWRM) for greater efficiency; addressing cesspool conversion and implementing transportation changes following legal settlements; supporting climate resilient projects; and promoting renewable energy transmission.

Additionally, the Senate plans to continue evaluating measures that address the issue of illegal fireworks, focusing on enhanced enforcement and preventive strategies to safeguard public safety.

Agricultural Innovation and other Revenue Streams

The Senate will continue to work on strengthening processes focused on agricultural innovation, along with exploring alternative revenue streams for the state. This includes the consideration of enhanced protections against theft and trespass on agricultural lands; improving the transportation of products (e.g., ports, cold storage, livestock facilities); streamlining aquaculture species permitting; promoting regenerative farming practices; increasing local food security; supporting value-added production; and boosting local products in local markets through streamlined facilities such as food hubs, co-operatives, and commercial kitchens. The Senate will also consider measures that aim to purchase agricultural land for development; and increase support for food innovation centers to enhance production capabilities. Furthermore, the Senate supports the responsible legalization of recreational marijuana, with a focus on

addressing any impacts on Hawai'i's communities.

Finally, the Senate remains committed to exploring innovative approaches to identify new revenue streams that will ensure the continuity and sustainability of essential state services. This proactive effort reflects the Senate's dedication to meeting the needs of our communities while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

"The Senate Majority's legislative priorities for 2025 reflect the collective vision and concerns shared by the 22 members of our Majority Caucus during our convening in mid-November," said Senate Majority Leader Kanuha. "Guided by these discussions, we are committed to addressing the critical challenges facing our state. Together, we aim to advance meaningful solutions and continue providing the support our communities need to thrive."

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ABOUT THE HAWAI'I STATE SENATE MAJORITY

The Hawai'i State Senate consists of 25 members who serve staggered four-year terms. The Senate Majority consists of 22 Democrats for the 33rd Legislature, which convenes on January 15, 2025. For the latest news and updates, follow the Senate Majority on Facebook, Instagram, or visit <https://www.hawaiisenatemajority.com>.