

January 16, 2010

I am writing to express my support for the Land fund.

This decision should not be up to the charter commission. But if there is anything you can do to help, we would appreciate it.

The charter amendment for 2% for the Land Fund was proposed to take the Land Fund deposits out of the county council's yearly budget wrangling. Charter amendments can only be changed by a vote of the people and not the council or the Mayor.

Suspension of deposits to the Land Fund was the first piece of legislation introduced by the Kenoi administration. Government does not like special funds, which takes money out of their control. HOW MANY TIMES TO WE HAVE TO BATTLE FOR WHAT 63% of us VOTED FOR?

63% is a voter's mandate. THE DIFFICULT EFFORT OF THE Petition Initiative DRIVE: In 4 months in 2006, over 100 volunteers collected almost 10,000 signatures on a petition initiative to get the question on the ballot: Whether or not to set aside 2% of property taxes each to acquire Hawaii county's treasured lands. 63% of voters approved this measure. This is a resounding mandate for county government to save our treasured places. This charter amendment is an opportunity to once again: ONCE AGAIN LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE.

The "great gift" of the Land Fund is to have dependable funding to get matching funds (usually dollar for dollar) from other government agencies. In the past Hawaii County has received matching funds from the State Legacy Lands, NOAA, and USFWS Endangered Species and private sources. We double our money with matching funds.

Important AG lands can be preserved with 2% funds. The County could buy conservation easements and "extinguish" the development rights on these lands, so they could be kept in AG uses forever and not lost to development.

The CHARTER AMENDMENT STATES THESE LANDS TO BE SAVED: Land for public recreation and education, including access to beaches and mountains; properties that preserve historic or culturally important land areas and sites; lands that protect our natural resources, including buffer zones and watershed lands to preserve water quality and water supply; and to land to preserve the forests, beaches, coastal areas, natural beauty and agricultural lands.

We don't have the money to develop parks now, why should we buy the land if we cannot do anything with it?" The County can buy land and "land bank" the property until money comes available to develop it. This way we can take beach access, cultural sites and watersheds out of the "path of development" and keep these lands for residents to enjoy. Some lands, like watersheds and endangered species habitat should be left alone or minimally used.

Please help!

Sincerely,

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