

February 8, 2010

RE: Land Fund

Dear commissioners,

I recently testified in favor of the 2% compromise at the commission meeting held in Kona in the Sheraton Keauhou conference room. As a West Hawaii resident and taxpayer I feel very strongly about the Big Island's distribution of tax funds. A few years ago the 2% fund for the preservation of Hawaiian land was placed on the ballot by non political (read non East Hawaii politics) means. Significantly more than half the population of the Island, including the East Hawaii population, made their desires known concerning the disposition of their tax dollars. This is no small indication of how people feel about the historic Big Island administrations and their disproportionate redistribution of funds for the Island's infrastructure and services. It was a chance to save a small (very small) portion of our governmental support for a better cause. Amazingly within almost no time at all the East Hawaii biased administration elected to attempt a raid on the fund, and additionally try to reduce the mandated amount to 1/2 %.

Now it seems that the whole effort must be repeated with (the presently known) political and financial loopholes removed. Please reinstate the 2% amount in the present financial structure of the 2% Land Fund. Land for preservation does not come cheaply and even the 2% (four million a year) amount is barely adequate for any serious land preservation effort. The reduction of the set aside to ½ percent (1 million per year) effectively hamstring the mandated land preservation effort.

As the Island population has been shown to be firmly behind this, please put the "Improved 2% land fund" on the ballot and allow the will of the people to be protected from the administration.

However the land fund is implemented, the funds need to be collected in a timely manner (twice a year as soon as taxes are obtained) and the fund should be immediately placed in an interest bearing account (the account should be protected in the same way that the principal is). As understood by the voters the Land Fund is for the acquisition of important land, not for the county's routine maintenance of the parks.

As an investment in the future of the Island, land should be acquired in an economical fashion, matching funds from other sources should be solicited and when obtained they should be used for land purchase by normally accepted methods. If an Open Space Bond is issued the monies should remain separate from other funds and the transparency concerning the Land Fund should be maintained so that the voters and taxpayers can monitor the fund's management.

Finally, at the risk of establishing more bureaucracy (there is probably someone already existing who is ideal for this position), there should be someone in the administrative government established as responsible to the people concerning these monies, purchases and land.

I am sure that I speak for a great many landowners and taxpayers when I urge you to put the revised 2% Land Fund on the ballot.

Ka mea I mahalo 'ia, Ben Dysart.