

To: Charter Commission

From: Susan Dursin, Captain Cook, 328-8514, sgd8@hawaiiantel.net

Date: February 27, 2010

Re: CA-16 Proposed Changes to Article XV - Charter Amendment and Revision

Dear Chairman Haitzuka and Members of the Charter Commission:

I am testifying in support of CA-16 because I feel that the process approved by voters for Article XI, Initiative and Referendum, is the process to be followed in Article XV, Charter Amendment and Revision. This process clearly identifies the steps that need to be followed by those who launch a petition drive. Unlike the current wording of Article XV, it alerts a petitioners committee to the amount of organization and follow-through required. The public should not be discouraged from launching such a drive, but they should not assume the process will be easy.

At the same time, it clearly states the responsibilities of those in county government dealing with a charter amendment or revision petition. The time frames are delineated. It allows the Office of Elections thirty days instead of twenty for verifying signatures. The proposed language for CA-16 allows them to use their present system of verification most easily.

The steps requiring county council action reflect the state's requirements for the charter commission, laid out in HRS 50-08 and 50-09.

In order to be successful a petitioners group must be highly committed to their cause. It goes without saying that the group has already exhausted any possibility of the council moving their issue forward. Then they must work very, very hard to gather enough verifiable signatures. The bars for success, as spelled out in CA-16, are extremely high. Finally, the result of a successful petition drive is simply to place an issue on the ballot, where the total electorate decides.

This is not an easy process, but it is a democratic process. I feel very strongly that confidence in government derives from transparency and access. In presenting the process of charter amendment and revision as a step-by-step plan without ambiguity, CA-16 protects both transparency and access. I hope you will approve the proposal as it stands.

I am sorry that I will be off-island from March 1 until April 6 and will not be available to testify in person.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Dursin