

Harry Kim
Mayor



Wil Okabe
Managing Director

Barbara J. Kossow
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i Office of the Mayor

25 Aupuni Street, Suite 2603 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720 • (808) 961-8211 • Fax (808) 961-6553
KONA: 74-5044 Ane Keohokālole Hwy., Bldg C • Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96740
(808) 323-4444 • Fax (808) 323-4440

February 19, 2019

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Committee on Judiciary

Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair
Committee Judiciary

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Wakai, and Committee Members:

RE: SB 1451 Relating to State Holidays

I have seen the near-unanimous support for re-establishing Hawaiian Recognition Day, but I must voice my objection to the current version of SB 1451. I apologize for not catching this bill when it was heard in its first committee.

My problem with this bill is not the idea of making Hawaiian Recognition Day a state holiday. Rather, I am strongly against doing away with Presidents' Day, part of our national heritage, part of being one of the United States of America. We are justly proud of the history of the Hawaiian nation, but we are also a part of the United States. It is not inconsistent to value both ancestries, and one legacy need not, and should not, be sacrificed for the sake of the other.

I would not have a problem if SB 1451 simply added a new holiday to our calendar. However, I remember that in order to establish Martin Luther King Day, there was a belief that we could not add an additional holiday to our schedule, so we did away with Columbus/Discoverer's Day. If it still is the opinion of the Legislature that there are "too many holidays," then I would urge that the holiday that singles out one religion—Good Friday—is the one that should be eliminated, and such action would be justified in the name of separation of church and state.

Yet another alternative (but I would defer to the advocates whether such an arrangement would be acceptable or desirable) would be to make Hawaiian Recognition Day the fourth Thursday (or even fourth Friday) in November. That would combine the new holiday with Thanksgiving, with which it would overlap every few years anyway.

If the only way to adopt a Hawaiian Recognition Day is to eliminate Presidents' Day, I hope you will not pass SB 1451. If the new holiday can be adopted in a way that honors our Hawaiian heritage and recognizes our American heritage, then I would look forward to supporting such legislation.

Thank you for the work you are doing, and for your consideration of this strongly held belief.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harry Kim".
Harry Kim
MAYOR