



Alewa Heights  
Kalihi  
Kalihi Valley  
Moanalua Gardens  
Moanalua Valley  
Kapalama  
Red Hill  
Halawa Heights  
Aiea

# community bulletin

Volume 38, No. 2  
Summer 2021



## Aloha, Friends and Neighbors

The 2021 session began with a tremendous amount of financial uncertainty, the result of a massive, pandemic-caused hole in the state budget that threatened to disrupt public services. While some cuts had to be made, the Legislature successfully put together a spending plan that avoided massive cutbacks and approved a slew of bills on a wide variety of needs.

### Budget

The Legislature authorized a biennium budget of \$15.91 billion for the fiscal year that begins July 1 and another \$15.27 billion for the following year. This is only an authorization to spend, not the actual expenditure of money.

Of these sums, \$7.43 billion in 2022 and \$7.50 billion in 2023 will be from the general fund, which consists mostly of tax revenues, fees, and assorted income. Thanks to Congress and the American Rescue Plan, established to address the adverse impact of the pandemic, Hawaii received \$1.06 billion for the coming fiscal year, plus another \$0.29 billion the next.

This outside cash, coming on the heels of an infusion of federal pandemic money received last year, enabled the state government to make up for a portion of the severe loss in tax revenues caused by our economic crisis. You will recall that, according to the Ige administration's initial projections, we were facing a whopping \$1.4-billion budget hole and employee furloughs in each of the next four fiscal years.

While we were able to stave off a looming crisis, we must be mindful that our economy has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels and tax revenues remain depressed—and will likely remain so for the near-term. That means the Legislature had to impose cuts on state agency budgets, and that we'll need to keep a very close eye on our future spending.

### Legislation

The Legislature approved 265 measures this session, selected from among the roughly 1,400 proposals introduced in each house.

The bills have been forwarded to the governor and most are awaiting his consideration. The deadline for his final actions is July 6, at which time he will approve a bill, allow it to become law without his signature, or veto it. The Legislature would have to act on any veto by that same date.

### Procurement Accountability Committee

Senate President Ron Kouchi has authorized the activation of the Senate Interim Procurement Accountability Committee to conduct fact-finding on state procurement. Members are Sharon Moriwaki, Michelle Kidani, Donovan Dela Cruz, Kurt Fevella, and me.

We will examine the awarding and execution of contracts being administered by such agencies as Accounting and General Services, Transportation, Education, the University of Hawaii, and public housing entities. We will study data regarding bids and RFPs (requests for proposals) that have been protested and the consistent use of consultants to manage contracts. The information will help the Committee on Government Operations develop procurement reform legislation next session.

### Free Wifi Coming to Kalihi

Free wifi will be introduced to Kalihi beginning this summer, part of a \$25-million state project to



Serving the constituents of Senate District 14 and the people of Hawaii during the 2021 legislative session were, from left: Nancy Bernal, Asami Kobayashi, Annika Nozaki, Cecile Yasay, and Senator Kim.



The 31st Legislature welcomed a record number of women senators—nine in all. Joining together in the Senator Chambers on opening day were, from left: Laura Acasio, Rosalyn Baker, Sharon Moriwaki, Donna Kim, Michelle Kidani, Lorraine Inouye, Bennette Misalucha, and Joy San Buenaventura. Not pictured is Maile Shimabukuro.

expand broadband services to select neighborhoods statewide. A community meeting, organized by your district legislators, was held July 7 at Kalihi Kai Elementary School to brief residents on the initiative. The Department of Transportation and Hawaiian Telcom will perform the work.

### Progress on the Pandemic

The governor has announced updated travel and gathering guidelines that will go into effect on July 8, based on a projection that Hawaii will reach the 60-percent vaccination rate by that date.

- Social gathering limits will be increased to 25 people indoors and 75 people outdoors.
- Restaurants can increase seating to 75 percent capacity, i.e., 25 people indoors and 75 people outdoors.
- Hawaii will accept vaccination records from other states and territories, enabling travelers to bypass our Safe Travels testing and quarantine requirements. Travelers must upload their vaccination cards to the Safe Travels website and bring a hard copy of that card when they arrive.

In general, gathering and travel restrictions are being eased as Hawaii's vaccination rate increases.

For the latest information on restrictions, vaccination sites, and other news, visit the state's COVID portal at <hawaiiicovid19.com>. Oahu residents should see <oneoahu.org> for information affecting the City and County of Honolulu.

### COVID-19 Special Committee

The Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 did not meet during the session but we expect to resume our oversight of the state's response to the pandemic in the coming weeks.

### Reapportionment

The Reapportionment Commission has convened and will continue to meet for the next three months to determine the boundaries of each political district based on the latest U.S. Census data. This exercise is conducted every 10 years following the completion of the census.

The commission will review the distribution of Hawaii's population and possibly redraw the political districts to ensure that citizens are equally represented. Depending on population growth, you may see some changes in district lines that could affect your representation in the House of Representatives, Senate, City Council, and Congress.

### Stay Safe

This was the second legislative session that forced us to adapt to the pandemic. The State Capitol was closed to the public for most of the last session and all of 2021's, but my staff and I were physically in the office ready and able to represent you to the best of our abilities.

We continued to respond to your calls and e-mails on everything from the pandemic, to matters before the Legislature, to the state budget. We heard you and will be steadfast in our advocacy on your behalf.

We're also showing success in curbing the spread of the COVID virus through personal safety measures, vaccinations, and other efforts. Let's stay safe and healthy and beat this pandemic.

Aloha,

Donna Mercado Kim  
Senator, District 14



# community survey 2021

LEGISLATURE  
2021



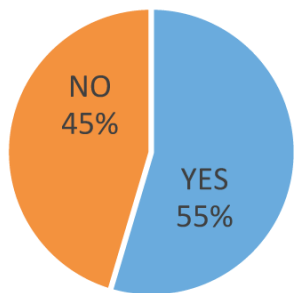
## Community Survey Results

*Mahalo for participating in our annual community survey on matters before the Legislature and community. Your input was welcome and helpful in shaping Senator Kim's views on the many bills that were under consideration during the session. The results are provided below.*

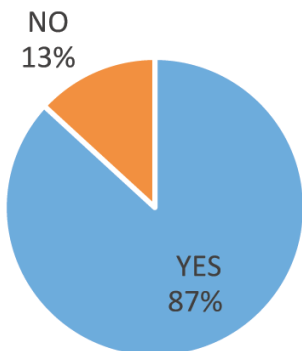
### COVID VACCINE

In a national survey, about 50 percent of Americans favored vaccination, 25 percent were unsure, and the remainder said they would not get the vaccine.

Have you received the vaccine?



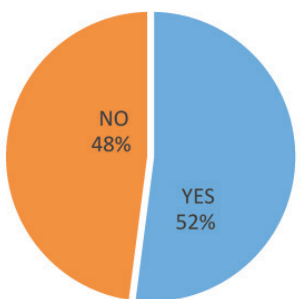
Will you be taking the COVID vaccine when it becomes available to you?



If not, why?

Respondents offered many reasons, including concerns about the vaccine's side-effects, problems with scheduling, or a desire to use alternative, non-medical prevention methods.

Do you think the state should mandate that all Hawaii residents take the COVID vaccine?

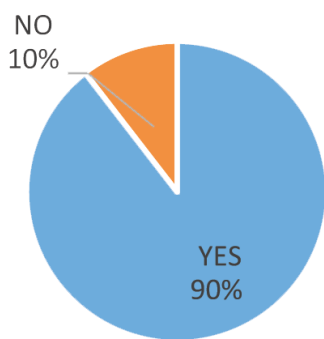


According to the Hawaii Department of Health, more than 50 percent of residents have been fully vaccinated. We have moved into the final tier, meaning the vaccine can now be administered to much younger people. Health care providers are intensifying their outreach efforts to encourage more people to get vaccinated.

### MASK MANDATE

We asked if the requirement to wear masks should be adopted statewide.

Are you in favor of this statewide mandate to wear masks?

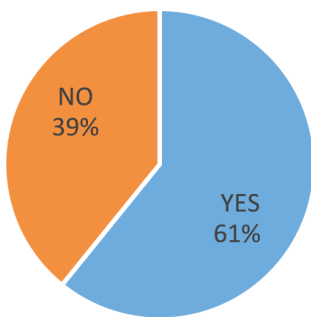


The governor has maintained the state's mask mandate, although the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have relaxed their standards. For updates on the pandemic, visit [hawaiiicovid19.com](http://hawaiiicovid19.com) or [health.hawaii.gov](http://health.hawaii.gov) for the latest information, statistics, and resources.

### STATE BUDGET

Earlier in the year, when faced with the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, Governor Ige announced furloughs of roughly 10,000 state employees for two days a month, with the exception of certain essential employees.

We asked if you supported his proposal to impose furloughs.

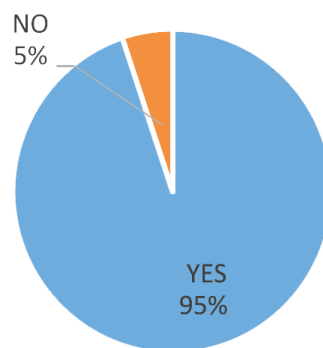


The infusion of federal American Rescue Plan money enabled the administration and Legislature to have enough money to avoid furloughs, at least for the time being. However, the pandemic has led to an economic downturn and the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenues. The Ige administration and Legislature will monitor the financial outlook and act accordingly.

### CRIMES AGAINST SENIORS

An increase in crimes against vulnerable seniors led to a call for stronger penalties against those who victimize these people.

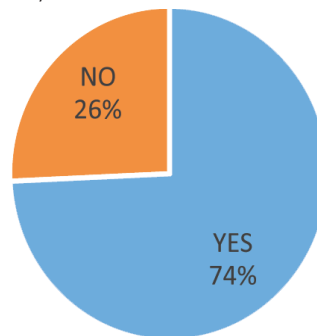
We asked if crimes against seniors necessitate stiffer penalties.



The Legislature adopted House Bill 490 this year, which lowers a victim's age from 62 years to 60 years for which stiffer penalties will be imposed in criminal acts.

### SAFETY CHECK DURATION

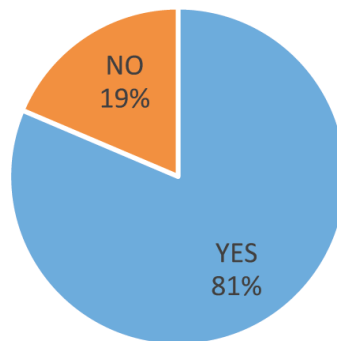
Should motor vehicle safety checks be required once every two years instead of annually?



Senator Kim introduced Senate Bill 591 but the proposal was not taken up by the Legislature.

### DRIVER'S LICENSE RENEWALS

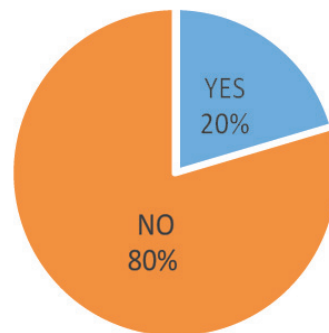
Should the renewal period be extended from two years to four years for licensees who are 72 years of age or older but under 80 years, provided they don't have two or more moving violation convictions after the licensee attained the age of 72 years?



Senator Kim co-sponsored Senate Bill 908 for this purpose, but the Legislature did not adopt any changes to the driver licensing requirements.

### VOTING AGE

Should the voting age be lowered to 15-17 years?



The Legislature considered Senate Bill 15, which would have lowered the voting age from 18 to 16 years. The bill was unsuccessful. However, in an effort to boost voter turnout, legislators did adopt a measure, Senate Bill 159, that adds a voter registration application to state ID and driver's license applications.

## Liliha Public Library Reopens

The Liliha Public Library reopened in June, after lengthy and extensive renovations to the 55-year-old building.

Library hours, for the time being, are:

Tuesday	9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Wednesday	9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Thursday	Noon – 7:00 p.m.
Friday	11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Saturday	9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Sunday and Monday	Closed

Pandemic protocols require that no more than 40 patrons be allowed in the building at a time.



The Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 toured the Pier 2 vaccination site, operated by Hawaii Pacific Health. The vaccination program has since been expanded to younger ages and many more locations, to include no-appointment, walk-in service at some places. Participating in the visit were, from left: Kurt Fevella, Donna Kim, Michelle Kidani, Jarrett Keohokalole, President Ronald Kouchi, and Raymond P. Vara, Jr., HPH's president and CEO.





# Senator Kim on the hotseat



In this edition,  
Senator Kim responds  
to claims by the  
University of Hawaii  
Professional Assembly,  
the faculty union.

**The University of Hawaii faculty union recently attacked you for cutting the school’s budget and for your proposal to limit tenure for non-instructional researchers. Can you explain what’s happening?**

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UPHA) recently launched a series of attacks on me because I dared to question the policies and practices of the institution that directly affect the high cost of a college education.

Student debt in our country is at an all-time high. Rather than seeing how we can reduce the cost of college, we offer students more and more loans. My goal—one shared by my fellow legislators and our entire community—is to make college more affordable by cutting unnecessary spending. We are failing at that mission and UHPA doesn’t want to be a part of the solution. Instead, UHPA has attacked me to divert attention from those problems, such as faculty workloads and tenure practices, that demand solutions.

The undergraduate resident tuition at UH Manoa is \$11,304 for two semesters. To this, a student would add fees of \$882, books at \$1,058, room and board of \$4,968, and other expenses of \$2,854. Kapiolani Community College’s tuition is \$4,624 a school year. Other campuses have comparable expenses.

It is alarming that although UH enrollment has declined, its expenses have continued to rise. Rather than improve efficiency or trim spending, UH administrators instead appeal to the Legislature for more money. The latest, the Hawaii Promise scholarship program, for which I doubled its appropriation, aims to help local students afford college. But these well-meaning efforts do not incentivize the UH to trim its spending and make college more affordable.

When accepting the chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, past chairs warned me about trying to get UH administrators to be more responsive to the students, reduce a large

bureaucracy, hold faculty accountable to required teaching loads, and classify UH researchers the same as comparable institutions.

I, too, have now experienced UHPA’s bullying tactics. UPHA targeted the last House Higher Education chair, who had raised similar concerns. The union spent more than \$90,000 to unseat him, an effort that proved unsuccessful.

It continues to be an uphill battle because the administration and UHPA will do anything to maintain the status quo and avoid needed changes. I challenge the UH and UPHA to justify to students, their parents, and taxpayers how a faculty member can teach (according to UH data) no classes, hold no campus office hours, and bring in little or no extramural funding, while being paid more than \$340,000 a year, while accruing vacation, sick leave, and pension benefits.

Board of Regents Policy 9.214 states, “As instruction is the university’s highest priority, teaching remains the most important duty of its faculty. This policy sets standards for the assignment of instructional component of faculty responsibilities.”

This policy requires that a full-time instructional faculty member teach 24 semester credit hours per academic year at the Manoa, Hilo, and West Oahu campuses. At the Community Colleges, that workload is 27 hours. But data from the UH show that many faculty teach just 8 to 12 semester hours a year. UH administrators acknowledge the disparity between what is required and what is reality. But by not upholding its own policies, UH undermines its hard-working, dedicated teachers.

Additionally, while students bear the cost of faculty salaries, they often don’t receive the benefit of senior, top-rated professors in the classroom because their classes are often taught by graduate students and lecturers. Parents complain to me that students cannot graduate on time because required classes often overlap or are unavailable as they are scheduled to accommodate the faculty,

not the needs of the students.

By contrast, our public school teachers are paid a quarter of a professor’s salary, do not have the luxury of assistance from a graduate student or lecturer, and cannot choose their workloads or the hours of the day they will work.

I introduced Senate Bill 1328, which sought to phase out tenure for non-instructional faculty. UPHA’s criticism of the bill ignored the underlying issue of unjustified employment policies.

Few, if any, colleges in the nation grant tenure to researchers. Of the institutions that do, nearly all require researchers to attract extramural research grants to cover 40 percent to 80 percent of their salaries and benefits. Instead, the UH pays its research staff from general funds, i.e., your tax dollars. UPHA claims that my proposal could jeopardize the school’s R1 status, which is false because most, if not all, R1 institutions do not tenure researchers. (R1 is the top level of research universities.)

This session we passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 201, S.D. 1, H.D. 1, which calls on the UH administration and UHPA to convene a task force to examine and assess the institution’s tenure system for researchers and other non-instructional staff and the compensation structure for faculty engaged in activities supported by extramural funding and grants, compare them to similar schools, and propose best practices that could be adopted by the UH.

**The University of Hawaii is responsible to the taxpayers of this state.**

As the recipient of a significant share of public money—\$473 million in general funds in each of the next two fiscal years—the University of Hawaii bears an obligation to ensure that money is prudently spent. The UH must ensure that it is getting the most of every tax dollar, that unnecessary spending is trimmed or eliminated, and that its policies and practices are up to date.

That is the mandate of every state agency, and the University of Hawaii is no exception.

## Schools, Stadium Set for Upgrades

Public school campuses in Senator Kim’s District 14 are slated to receive funding for major capital improvements.

**Aiea High School:** \$6.2 million to construct a culinary and multipurpose room in the cafeteria and renovate two rooms in Building C.

**Dole Middle School:** \$2 million for outdoor coverings for learning and meeting spaces, cafeteria improvements, and furniture and equipment.

**Kalihi Elementary School:** \$720,000 for various projects, including hazardous materials remediation, ventilation, repair and replacement of windows, and ground and site improvements.

**Kalihi Waena Elementary School:** \$3 million for improvements to sidewalks and bridges for access to the campus, repair of a footbridge, and accessibility and grounds construction.

**Kapalama Elementary School:** \$700,000 to construct parking for student drop-off, ground and site improvements, and equipment.

**Moanalua Elementary School:** \$4 million to build and equip a multipurpose innovation center.

**Moanalua Middle School:** \$3.5 million for a covered play court, ground and site improvements, and equipment.

**Red Hill Elementary School:** \$700,000 for a covered play court, ground and site improvements, and equipment.

**Webling Elementary School:** \$1 million for covered walkways and other improvements.

**Aloha Stadium**

Change is afoot at the Aloha Stadium, on several fronts.

The Aloha Stadium Authority voted in May to proceed with the demolition of the 46-year-old facility at the end of next year. That’s about a year earlier than previously announced.

The 2021 Legislature authorized \$4.4 million and \$1 million in each of the next two fiscal years for Aloha Stadium operations and a structural engineering assessment, using money from the recent federal pandemic relief appropriation. The Stadium Authority has proposed that

the engineering money be applied instead to the new stadium.

In addition, the Legislature approved House Bill 1348, H.D. 2, S.D. 2, C.D. 1, which establishes an entity to guide and oversee the development of a new stadium and the surrounding Salt Lake property. Plans call for housing and commercial space on the site, which includes a transit station.

Provisions of the bill include creating a stadium development special fund and abolishing the existing stadium fund; revising the general development guidance policies for the stadium development district; clarifying the roles of the Stadium Authority and Hawaii Community Development Authority; and authorizing the stadium authority to acquire and hold title to real property.



## Legislature Approves Bills and Budget

The 31st Legislature adjourned at the end of April with the approval of the state government's two-year budget and a number of bills.

Most notable was passage of **Senate Bill 1350, S.D. 1, H.D. 2, C.D. 1**, which defers pay raises a second time for legislators, the governor, lieutenant governor, directors and deputies of state agencies, and judges. The raises would have gone into effect automatically on July 1 had the Legislature not taken this action.

The bill also contained a section on the Reapportionment Commission, including funding, public notice requirements, nomination papers for the 2022 primary election, and other election-related provisions.

### Budget Highlights

The biennium budget contains numerous provisions for public programs and services, using both general funds and American Rescue Plan (pandemic relief) allocations. Here are some that may be of interest to readers:

- **Bishop Museum:** \$626,000 in federal pandemic relief money.
- **Government fraud:** \$870,000 and nine positions to establish a complex litigation, fraud, and compliance unit focusing on civil and criminal cases and fraud and ethics violations in government.
- **Medicaid fraud:** \$531,000 for the Medicaid fraud control unit, which investigates and prosecutes fraud and patient abuse or neglect in various types of health care facilities.
- **Veterans cemeteries:** \$130,500 for three general laborer positions; \$143,900 to restore salaries to three positions, including the operations manager and veterans services counselor; and \$194,000 for vault liners and travel funds for counselors.

- **Instruction:** \$1.03 billion for school-based budgeting for the classroom.
- **Early College:** \$2.59 million to offer more than 400 classes for 43 high schools.
- **Hawaii Keiki:** \$2.48 million to promote healthy children and reduce absenteeism.
- **Special education:** \$401 million, plus \$4.4 million to restore defunded positions.
- **Early Learning:** \$7 million.
- **University of Hawaii:** \$27.3 million in 2022 and \$32.9 million in 2023 in general funds to restore reductions to the school's budget, thereby restoring 60 percent of the governor's original proposed budget reductions and 80 percent to the Community Colleges.
- **University of Hawaii Cancer Center:** \$3.1 million.
- **Hawaii Promise:** \$3.1 million in state and pandemic relief funds in each fiscal year for the University of Hawaii's scholarship program.

### Pandemic Funding

American Rescue Plan funds were designated for a number of needs:

- **Unemployment insurance:** \$700.2 million in 2022 and \$5.1 million in 2023 to repay the loan principal and interest for the program.
- **Rent supplement:** \$500,000 in additional funding for low-income families.
- **General assistance:** \$5.4 million in additional funding for temporarily disabled individuals to maintain their current levels of benefits.
- **Homelessness:** \$14.3 million for a variety of services for the homeless.
- **Child care:** \$31 million to cover two years' cash support for child care.
- **Perinatal support:** \$681,202 for services, plus \$1.7 million and \$702,000 the next two years for perinatal support and family planning services.
- **Office on Aging:** \$1.5 million for senior center services.



### Kalihi Parking Gets a Look

Senator Kim joined, from left, Councilmember Carol Fukunaga, resident Hazel Murakami, Honolulu Mayor Rick Blangiardi, and resident Lynette Kumalae for a first-hand examination of the Wilson Tract neighborhood's permit parking project to identify its effectiveness. The project grants permits to households along designated streets to park beyond the allotted time limits specified on street signs.

donna mercado  
**kim**  
STATE SENATOR DISTRICT 14

PRSRT MKTG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
HONOLULU, HI  
PERMIT NO. 2071

PAID FOR BY FRIENDS OF DONNA MERCADO KIM  
P.O. Box 2395, Honolulu, Hawaii 96804 | facebook.com/DonnaMercadoKim.com



### Senator Lends a Hand to Fruit Road Project

Senator Kim joined Kalihi Waena Elementary School Principal Dan Larkin, elected officials, and volunteers in March for the Yellow Fruit Road project. It involves constructing a 250-foot-long sidewalk, covered by a pergola supporting fruit trees and fruit-bearing vines. The walkway will provide cover for students walking to school; produce fresh fruit like lemons, limes, oranges, and other citrus; and teach students about sustainability, economics, and agriculture. Members of the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers, Local 1, played a key role in turning the idea into a reality.

Senator Kim also toured a footbridge (pictured here) at the school, for which the Legislature appropriated funds to replace the structure that will connect the Towers at Kuhio Park to the campus. At present, students walk daily through dirt or mud, as well as refuse, to reach the school grounds. Pictured with the senator are Larkin (to her left), Representative Sonny Ganaden (back to camera), and Councilmember Radiant Cordero (facing group).



### Bill Clark Honored

The Aiea Neighborhood Board honored longtime member Bill Clark (center) and wife Joanne (to Clark's left) for his outstanding service to the board and community. Presenting honorary certificates to Clark were, from left, Representative Aaron Johanson, Councilmember Brandon Elefante, Senator Kim, Senator Bennette Misalucha, and Representative Sam Kong.