

PIA Committee

From: Celeste Nip <nipfire@hawaii.rr.com>
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To: PIA Committee
Subject: HFFA Testimony - June 1, 2016 Hearing
Attachments: 2016-0601 Maui Policy and Intergovernmental Affair Committee.pdf

Attached is the Hawaii Fire Fighters Association's testimony for tomorrow's hearing.

Please include in record and a representative will be there to testify.

If you have any questions, please call me at 282-1415.

Thank you,

Celeste Nip



HAWAII FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

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Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs Committee
Council of the County of Maui
June 1, 2016

Proposed Charter Amendments Restricting County Officials' Political Activity
PIA-10(10) and PIA-10-(13)

My name is Robert H. Lee and I am the President of the Hawaii Fire Fighters Association (HFFA), Local 1463, IAFF, AFL-CIO. The HFFA represents more than 1,900 professional and 800 retired fire fighters throughout the State which includes approximately 285 active-duty and 110 retired members of the Maui Fire and Public Safety Department. We are in strong opposition of, and in fact offended by, the proposed charter amendments restricting county officials from participating in certain political activities outside of the workplace and is affronted that such proposals would be brought forward.

Up front and quite honestly, these proposals are disturbing, especially PIA-10(13). In a time when government is supposed to be encouraging involvement in the political process these proposals are counter-productive and restrictive to a particular group of people - public employees. This amendment seems to allow a mayor and/or county council to make decisions that impact public employees and their families (good or bad) and the employee has no rights to engage in the political process to either support or oppose such candidates responsible for these decisions. There are ethics laws in place to prohibit politicians and employers from using their authority and influence to negatively impact employees. As the exclusive representative of our fire fighters, I do not see how restricting employees in this manner can be an ethics concern. The responsibility of ensuring there is no "undue political influence in decisions relating to the employment, promotion, and retention of employees" still resides with the parties that make the decisions and not the employees. In the end, this just does not seem right.

Furthermore, there are currently clear and responsible laws and rules which prohibit public employees from engaging in certain political activities while working which are well reasoned and appropriate. While those rules affect the public employees while on the job, these proposals discourages and denies public employees from engaging in political activities solely on the basis of their employer while not working. The choice to participate in electoral and political process is a fundamental right of all citizens and is sacrosanct.

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Political Activity PIA-10(10) and PIA-10(13)

As public employees, the decisions that lawmakers adopt can directly impact the workplace and conditions of employment. HFFA believes that all citizens, including public employees, have a right to participate in the process which includes supporting candidates who work with us whether it is through in kind donations and monetary donations.

These proposals are unjust and unfathomable. As baffling is the motive and/or justification for these proposals. Legislators are elected to represent the men and women in their communities regardless of their employer. They are there because of the hard-working men and women of our communities.

HFFA strongly opposes the proposed charter amendments and respectfully request that the Committee defer any further action on these proposals.