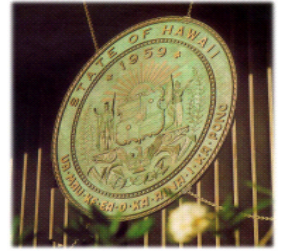


Capitol Connection

Issue 8

April 12, 2004



Aloha! The exciting time of conference is beginning at the Legislature, when the House and Senate attempt to agree on final versions of surviving but amended bills. This issue of the Capitol Connection focuses on conference and highlights some of the key legislative bills in or approaching conference.

The deadline for agreement to be reached in a conference committee is the final decking deadline, on April 29th for non-fiscal bills and April 30th for fiscal bills (bills referred to Senate Ways and Means or House Finance).

If this is your first time receiving the Capitol Connection, please contact my office if you would like to continue receiving my newsletter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Y. Ige".

David Y. Ige
State Senator
16th District

Going through Conference

After second decking and floor votes have been taken in the opposite chamber, surviving crossover bills are returned to their originating chamber. If the bill has not been amended by the crossover chamber, it is sent to the Governor, and with her signature the bill becomes law. If the crossover chamber has amended the bill, the lead committee's chair in the originating chamber must examine the amendments. If the chair agrees to the changes, the amended bill is referred to the full original chamber for a vote on final reading. However, if the chair disagrees with the changes, the bill is sent to conference.

During conference, the Leadership in the House and the Senate appoint conferees who attempt to resolve disagreements between the House and the Senate relating to the language and contents of the bill. If the House and Senate conferees cannot come to an agreement before the deadline for final decking, the bill remains in conference and is not reported out for final reading. If a bill does not pass out of its conference committee before the final decking deadline, the bill dies.

If the originating chamber withdraws its objections to a bill's amendments, the bill is scheduled for final reading in that chamber. If it passes final reading, the bill is transmitted to the Governor for her signature to become law.

If the conference managers are able to agree on the bill's language and contents, the originating body creates the final amended version of the bill, known as a conference draft. If the bill passes final reading in both houses, the bill is transmitted to the Governor, and it becomes law if she signs the bill.

One of the main changes to conference procedures for this session was the re-adoption of the one-member, one-vote policy. A majority of the quorum present from each chamber in a conference committee must vote in favor of the proposed amendments for the bill to be passed out of committee. Previously, the chairs as well as a majority of the quorum in each chamber had to vote for the proposed changes.

Conference committee meetings are open to the public, although no testimony is accepted at this point. Public notice must be given 24 hours prior to the first conference committee meeting, and conference committee deliberations can only take place between 8:00 AM and 12:00 midnight. Conference committee hearing notices are available on the Capitol's website at www.capitol.hawaii.gov.

Status of Senate Bills

SAT and ECD Bills

SB 2558 SD2 HD1: Relating to the entertainment industry

This bill increases the tax credit for performing arts productions, sound recordings, and digital media products produced in the State, provided that certain expenditures and below-the-line hiring requirements are met.

Current Status: Passed with amendments by both the joint House Economic Development and Business Concerns/ Tourism, Art, and Culture (EDB/TAC) Committee and the House Finance Committee (FIN).

SB 3024 SD2 HD1: Relating to capital formation

This bill adopts new capital formation incentives, provides tax credits for qualifying research activities and high technology business incentives, appropriates funds for the state private investment fund, repeals the sunset of the Hawaii Strategic Development Corporation, and modifies Act 221 to close existing loopholes.

Current Status: Passed with amendments by EDB and subsequently passed unamended by FIN.

Other Bills

SB 3237 SD1 HD1, Hawaii Rx bill

This bill establishes program goals and adopts income and other eligibility requirements for the state discounted drug prescription program renamed "Rx Plus." It requires the creation of a preferred drug list and review by pharmacy and therapeutic committee. It clarifies the consequences of manufacturer or labeler nonparticipation and appropriates funds for the program.

Current Status: The Senate disagreed with House changes to the bill, and the bill is in conference.

SB 3238 SD2 HD2, Omnibus Education bill

This bill implements education reform and decentralization measures and establishes a weighted student formula for providing operating money to individual public schools.

Current Status: The Senate disagreed with House changes to the bill, and the bill is in conference.

HB 1800 HD1 SD1, Relating to the State budget

This bill appropriates supplemental funds to various programs and agencies for the fiscal biennium ending in June 30, 2005.

Current Status: The House disagreed with Senate changes. The bill is in conference.

HB 2004 HD1 SD1, relating to the illegal use of controlled substances

This bill makes appropriations for crystal meth treatment, prevention, rehabilitation, and monitoring by the Department of Health. It also makes appropriations to the Judiciary to expand services by the drug courts.

Current Status: The House disagreed with Senate changes. The bill is in conference.

To get more information on conference committee hearing notices and the status of bills, please contact my office or visit the Capitol's website at www.capitol.hawaii.gov.

Community Corner

There is an upcoming Pearl City and Aiea town meeting on Monday, April 26th, at 7:00-8:30 PM at the Pearl Ridge Elementary School cafeteria. The focus of the meeting will be on education and student achievement.

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