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## Hawaii News

# Lawmaker ousted from panel chair

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**Angus McKelvey:**

*He will now head the Higher Education panel*

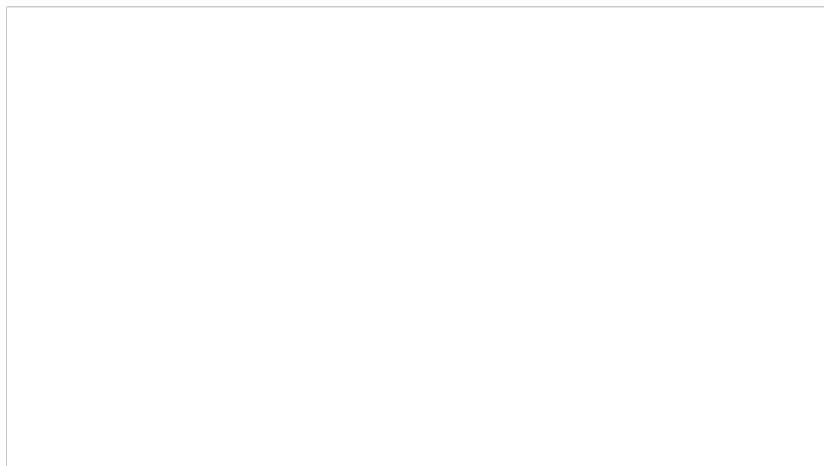
The state House of Representatives voted Monday to remove Rep. Angus McKelvey as chairman of the Consumer Protection and Commerce Committee, a powerful post that holds sway over issues relating to business in the state. In recent years the committee

has taken up controversial issues such as pesticide regulation, illegal vacation rentals and payday lending.

The vote was 38-9, with four abstentions.

The House leadership wouldn't say why a majority of members agreed to remove McKelvey, a move that is highly unusual during the middle of a legislative session when committee leaders are sifting through hundreds of bills. But House members have said privately in recent days that it relates to a history of political maneuvering by McKelvey that left his colleagues taking the fall for some unpopular decisions, including recent actions on a contentious bill that would have increased regulation of pesticides.

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McKelvey (D, Lahaina-Kaanapali-Honokohau), who served as chairman of the committee since 2013, didn't return a call seeking comment. His office door was locked following the midday floor vote, which he missed.

McKelvey will now lead the Higher Education Committee, while Rep. Roy Takumi will take over as chairman of the Consumer Protection panel. Rep. Justin Woodson will be chairman of the Education Committee, which had been led by Takumi.

"All three of them are looking forward to working in their respective committees," House Speaker Joe Souki (D, Waihee-Waiehu-Wailuku) told reporters following the floor session. "It was mutually acceptable by all members."

Souki maintained his sanguine appraisal of the situation when pressed by reporters to explain why McKelvey was removed.

When asked whether it was about a pesticide bill that died on the House floor last week, House Bill 790, Souki said, "This has to do with only the reassignment of committee chairs, and (McKelvey) is looking forward to being the chair of Higher Education."

Souki described his fellow Maui colleague as a “very good friend” and said that the decision to change the committee assignments was made sometime last week.

However, as recently as Friday afternoon, House Majority Leader Scott Saiki told the Honolulu Star-Advertiser that McKelvey was not being removed as chairman of the Consumer Protection Committee, calling it a false rumor. Saiki on Monday did not respond to calls seeking comment.

The House leadership appeared to try to clamp down on any drama surrounding the change in committee assignments at the state Capitol on Monday. The resolution ordering the change was not placed on the online agenda of the day’s floor session.

When House Vice Speaker John Mizuno called for a vote on the resolution, he didn’t announce what it was about.

Mizuno was about to call for the final vote when Rep. Cynthia Thielen (R, Kailua--Kaneohe) rose and asked, “Mr. Speaker, is now the appropriate time to discuss the substance of the measure?”

After a pregnant pause, Mizuno said yes.

Thielen said she thought McKelvey had done a “very measured, intelligent, good job” as chairman of the Consumer Protection Committee, and said she was disappointed to see him go.

A handful of her Republican and Democratic colleagues joined her in voting against the resolution.

The House needed at least 26 votes to change the committee assignments, but Souki said that information on who supported the resolution before it made it to the floor for a vote would not be released publicly.

When asked why the decision seemed shrouded in secrecy, Souki said, “We are always secretive. It’s part of being a legislator.”

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