

**iLind**

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**Bill would make public employment a zone of secrecy**

Posted on [January 19, 2012](#) by [Ian Lind](#) | [4 Comments](#)

And away we go!!

The 2012 session of the Hawaii State Legislature started yesterday, and tomorrow morning the first bill that would hammer away at the public's right to know will have [a public hearing before the House Committee on Labor & Public Employment](#). The hearing is scheduled for 10:05 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. in Conference Room 309.

HB 1356 was introduced last year by Rep. Karen Awana but died without a hearing. If passed into law, the bill would mean we would no longer know much of anything about people on the public's payroll.

The bill is certainly not the first bid to limit information about public workers, but it could be the most ambitious.

Public testimony should urge Committee Chair Karl Rhoads to stop this bill now and support the need for openness and accountability in public employment.

Thanks to Nikki Love of Common Cause Hawaii for calling attention to the bill and the upcoming hearing.

The bill would shield even the most basic information, the names of public employees, from disclosure.

Here's what else would be rendered state secrets under this bill:

- *business address*
- *business telephone number*
- *job description*
- *education and training background*
- *previous work experience*
- *dates of employment*
- *position number*

- *type of appointment*
- *occupation*
- *bargaining unit*
- *employing agency, department, division, branch, office, section, etc.*
- *island of employment*

The only information deemed “public” would be a job title and associated salary range.

The bill’s introduction says it is in reaction to Civil Beat’s requests for public information about public employees, and subsequent publication of employee rosters and salaries.

Although the bill refers to the possible increased risk of identity theft, none of the published information was of the detailed and personal nature that would contribute to such a risk.

Testimony on HB 1356 can be [easily submitted online](#).



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#### 4 RESPONSES TO “BILL WOULD MAKE PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT A ZONE OF SECRECY”

**Kimo in Kailua** | [January 19, 2012 at 6:48 am](#) | [Reply](#)



Why is this such a “urgency” when this provision has been enshrined in the law for 23 years? The Advertiser would annually report on the highest paid employees so why the brainless knee jerk reaction to the Civil Beat stories? Public Funds + Public Employees = Public information. If you want privacy, go work for Mobil Exxon or Bain Capital.

**Kimo in Kailua** | [January 19, 2012 at 7:04 am](#) | [Reply](#)



... and by the way, one of the complaints against the King by our Founding Fathers in the Declaration of Independence was that the King would assemble the colonial legislatures in sites distant from the colonies public records.

“A popular Government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own Governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives.”

James Madison, Letter to W. T. Barry, August 4, 1822

**ohiaforest3400** | [January 19, 2012 at 9:39 am](#) | [Reply](#)



Altho' a public employee, I can't support this bill for the reasons you mention. However, I will say this:

Civil Beat did itself and the cause of "openness" no favor by the way in which it handled publication of the salary figures. There were names, cryptic position titles, salaries AND NOTHING ELSE. There was nothing to place any of the information in context: job description, education/training, prior experience, etc.

Civil Beat's approach came off not as "we're advancing the public interest" but as a totally egotistical and self-congratulatory "we did it because we can."

The story seriously damaged morale in a number of agencies, including my own, because there was insufficient information to make any kind of a judgment whatsoever as to whether the salaries were warranted. It was tittilatimng, shock journalism at its worst; I'll defend my salary and argue for more if I know why others are paid more or less than I but the Civil Beat stories made no attempt to enable such a discussion.

I was unimpressed with Civil Beat up to that point; I am disgusted with it now.

**Wailau** | [January 19, 2012 at 11:04 am](#) | [Reply](#)



My wife is a public employee, and she and I have no objection to her salary and name being public knowledge. "Public" is the word that gets lost in all of this. The public has a right to know who is working for the government and what they are being paid. If you want privacy in these matters, then choose to work in the private sector.

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