

HAWAII

Does Calvin Say Control Reapportionment?

UPDATED House dissidents accuse House Speaker of gerrymandering enemies out of office.

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UPDATED Saturday 3/3/12 9 a.m.

Members of a dissident faction of Democrats who have long opposed Hawaii House Speaker [Calvin Say](#) argue that Say is behind new political boundaries that could force some of those dissidents out of office this year.

The dissidents believe that one of Say's two appointments to the 2011 [Reapportionment Commission](#), Clarice Hashimoto, is effectively doing Say's bidding to punish dissidents for trying to [oust the speaker](#).

And whether or not Say is pulling the strings, other Capitol denizens and a university political scientist, say the maps do appear skewed to favor the speaker.

Hashimoto, a former House representative currently working as a special assistant in Say's office, is one of four members of the commission's technical committee — the group responsible for drawing district lines based on census data.

Two of the dissidents — there are currently 14 in all — told Civil Beat they believe Hashimoto is influencing the commission to favor supporters of the speaker.

Neither would allow their names to be used; Civil Beat granted them anonymity

because the representatives fear retaliation, especially during session when legislation is pending. They don't want their bills to be held or killed.

But talk of Hashimoto's maneuvering has been circulating around the Capitol for some time, and at least one other public official — also granted anonymity, for the same reasons — told Civil Beat that he also believes it's true.

House spokeswoman Georgette Deemer said, "Speaker Say will not be responding on this."

Deemer also said Hashimoto told her to direct media inquiries to Commission Chair Victoria Marks.

Marks, a retired court judge, said she isn't buying the conspiracy theory involving Hashimoto.

"It doesn't make sense to me," she said. "She is one of four on the technical committee, and she is one of nine on the commission. Assuming that that is what she was trying to do — and first of all, I don't think it's a fair assumption — but if I do, if that was the evil behind-the-scenes kind of thing, when the first set of maps came out in September no one said boo. Apparently they liked those, and, sorry we got sued and had to go back and redo them all again."

Shrinking Coalition

House dissidents are understandably worried about losing any leverage they have in the House.

Civil Beat analyzed legislative records last year and showed that, as compared to Say supporters, dissidents have passed fewer bills, held fewer leadership positions and saw smaller amounts of money go to their districts for capitol improvement projects.

They numbered 19 just over a year ago but have seen their membership shrink to 14; two left for other jobs, creating vacancies; two others may or may not still side with dissidents, and one switched allegiance to the speaker.

UPDATE

Say's coalition of 24 members has stayed mostly intact. But 26 votes are needed to be elected speaker.¹

Three new representatives, each appointed, have not yet had to take a public stance on who should serve as speaker. That chance will come not long after election day Nov. 6.

Say was re-elected speaker in January 2011 — he has held the job since 1999 — after a [strange floor session](#) that resulted in all 43 Democrats and eight Republicans voting unanimously.

Say threw the dissidents a few bones — a committee chair, a floor leader and a majority whip position — but his faction still solidly rules the legislative roost.

11th Hour Play

On Wednesday, as the reapportionment commission was prepared to take a final vote on the maps, Rep. Sylvia Luke, the leading dissident, told the commission that the proposed district lines were “problematic.”

Luke said the lines violated the state Constitution because they “unduly favor a person or a political faction.”

She produced data, including an analysis by a University of Hawaii mathematician, that Luke said clearly showed dissidents “were more severely impacted” by the district lines. According to Luke, the UH professor said the unfair treatment was deliberate.

For example, Luke said the data show that five dissidents would be forced to run in revised districts that had the highest percentage of new voters — that is, voters they had not faced in their last elections.

Neal Milner, a retired UH political science professor, agreed with the analysis.

“The chance that a fair process would produce an unusual pattern like this is one in a

thousand,” he said. “That’s a very powerful statistical finding.”

Henry Curtis and Kat Brady, longtime political activists intimately familiar with the political battles at the Capitol, testified that they believed — as Curtis put it — the lines were drawn to favor “the dominant powers.”

Others, like Nikki Love of Common Cause Hawaii, complained that there had not been enough time for public comment on the maps. Janet Mason of the League of Woman Voters was concerned about the 9.9 percent deviation in population counts for Oahu seats.

Sitting with Luke at Wednesday’s hearing were fellow dissidents Della Au Belatti, Roy Takumi, Scott Saiki and Chris Lee. Under the proposed plan, Belatti and Saiki would be forced into a primary race against each other.

Luke and Lee presented the commission with an alternative map for Oahu, one based on the September 2011 maps — the ones ultimately invalidated by the Hawaii Supreme Court because they counted military and students as permanent residents.

Using the reapportionment commission’s own software, Luke and Lee eliminated the 108,000 residents ordered removed by the court and came up with an Oahu map that they believe has little deviation. It also pits only two sets of Oahu incumbents against each other — Democrat Rida Cabanilla and Republican Kimberly Pine, and Democrat Mark Hashem and Republican Barbara Marumoto.

The technical committee is studying the Luke-Lee map and is expected to inform the commission Friday afternoon whether to incorporate suggestions from it or to stick with the maps approved by the commission last month — the maps that would force two Oahu senators and six sets of incumbents to run against each other, should they seek re-election.²

Fear of Lawsuits, and Perception

The commission has already been sued, and there is talk of new lawsuits based on the new maps.

All the while, the State Elections Office is eager to receive final district lines so candidates can begin filing for election — something that was to have begun a month ago.

Eight of the commission members decided that it was wiser to give themselves a few more days to sort things out.

But Dylan Nonaka, one of House Minority Leader Gene Ward's two appointments to the commission — and another member of the technical committee — took umbrage at the suggestion the commission had gerrymandered.

“Personally, I don't appreciate the accusation of gerrymandering,” he said Wednesday before the commission voted 8-1 to consider the Luke-Lee map. “I don't appreciate conspiracy theories. ... To insinuate that we got together to harm another faction, that's ridiculous.”

Nonaka, a former Hawaii Republican Party executive director and a confidant of former U.S. Rep. [Charles Djou](#), said he would never do “the bidding” of the Speaker of the House.

“That would call into question our whole integrity ... that we ganged up on a faction,” he said.

Two other commission members said they shared Nonaka's view, but that the best path was to take a look at the maps one more time.

If the commission agrees to redo the maps, two more hearings will have to be held next week. If the Luke-Lee proposal is rejected, the Elections Office is prepared to begin accepting candidates as early as Monday.

It's high stakes stuff.

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8 Comments

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**Jack Kelly**

The one central figure that always comes up when questions of integrity hound the hawaii legislature; you guessed it, Calvin Say. Believe it.

Like · Reply ·  1 · Mar 2, 2012 7:32am**TC Lee** · Boston University

Neal Milner, a retired UH political science professor, agreed with the analysis.

"The chance that a fair process would produce an unusual pattern like this is one in a thousand," he said. "That's a very powerful statistical finding."

House spokeswoman Georgette Deemer said, "Speaker Calvin Say will not be responding on this."

Why not?

Like · Reply ·  2 · Mar 2, 2012 10:58am**Roy Kamisato** · University of Hawaii at Manoa

Good article on this subject. Chad is just reporting the facts without claiming to know something he doesn't. It appears unless something else comes up we will be left with the usual name calling or evidenceless (hey I made up a new word) accusations.

Like · Reply ·  1 · Mar 2, 2012 10:26am**Robert C. La Mont**

Does the Luke Lee proposal reduce the disparity below the 9.9% in current maps?

Like · Reply · Mar 2, 2012 11:16am

**Chad Blair** · Works at Honolulu Civil Beat

Robert — according to Rep. Luke and her supporters, the 9.9 percent is reduced significantly.

Like · Reply · Mar 3, 2012 11:30am



Bart Dame

Chad (and Robert),

If you go to the online mapping software as per my suggestion in the comment upthread, you can review the maps submitted by Reps Luke and Lee. There is a box which tracks the population in each district and its deviation from the ideal target population for a district, both as the number of people and as a percentage. The proposed districts range from +4.84% in excess population (HD 43) to -4.96% (HD 29). That is a cumulative deviation of 9.8%, virtually the same as the official proposal.

While having a numerical value may seem like an objective standard for comparing two ... [See More](#)

Like · Reply · 2 · Mar 3, 2012 2:17pm



Kim Coffee Isaak · Owner at Green Dog Projects

Bart Dame thanks so much for such enlightening comments. IMHO it should be ALL about the preservation of the integrity of existing communities, I mean come on!-it's about us after all! we the people. I hope the communities come out in support of their reps who are putting it all on the line for them. That's our role.

Like · Reply · 2 · Mar 4, 2012 1:00pm



Bart Dame

Wow, Chad. "Hard-hitting," huh?

I think the story is demonizing Clarice Hashimoto a bit too much.

The Commission is supposed to produce maps of districts with equal population, respecting existing communities and natural geographical features, contiguous and compact, without favor to an individual or faction. There are so many factors to balance and neither the terrain nor the clusters in which people live make this an easy task. It requires (or "allows") a great deal of discretion on the part of the map-makers.

The Technical Committee is structured to ensure SOME interests are empowered to... [See More](#)

Like · Reply · 3 · Mar 2, 2012 1:03pm



Chad Blair · Works at Honolulu Civil Beat

Bart -- very thoughtful comment, thanks. You get a "like" from me!

Like · Reply · Mar 3, 2012 11:30am



Ragnar Carlson · U of Rihanna

This anonymous accusation thing is weird. What do these Representatives have to lose by going public? The Speaker knows who is saying these things, as does everyone else at the Capitol. It's only the public that's in the dark.

Like · Reply · Mar 2, 2012 5:28pm



Dave Kozuki · Honolulu, Hawaii

Some day, not long in the future, we'll have a software that will use rules to draw the lines. It

will allow for citizen input, not a committee. People will grumble, but it will be about the rules and those can rules can be fine tuned. Sorta like the Bowl Championship Series. Hopefully this will reduce if not eliminate all this unproductive negative energy so that we can focus more on bettering our community.

Like · Reply ·  2 · Mar 2, 2012 6:10pm



Bart Dame

The redistricting map offered by the dissidents can be seen the Reapportionment Commission's website by those who have an account to use the online mapping software. Go to OPen Plan, look in the folder Shared Plans/ Everyone. The plan is named "Lee/Luke Alternative Oahu House Map 2-28-12.

Like · Reply · Mar 3, 2012 1:29am



Keiko Bonk · University of Hawaii at Manoa

We will never know for sure if Calvin Says has been able to hold on to his power through his influence on the reapportionment process. HOWEVER, IF IT IS TRUE, HE MADE ONE BIG MISTAKE. I WAS REAPPORTIONED INTO HIS DISTRICT. The moment I found out I called around to ask if people wanted me to run against him. The response was overwhelmingly YES. If he really did control the reapportionment of district 20, his district, then I'M HOPING IT TURNS OUT TO BE THE MISTAKE THAT IS HIS OWN UNDOING.

Help me make Calvin's mistake come home to haunt him. I need your help to end Calvin's 36 year reign in the House. To learn more about me and my ideas for our community, go to www.keikobonk.com and consider donating my campaign or volunteering. We can stop Calvin Say without corporate money. We just need to stand up as free and independent citizens of Hawaii and take charge of our own government.

Like · Reply ·  2 · Sep 8, 2012 7:17pm



Keiko Bonk

Please share this

Like · Reply · Sep 8, 2012 7:22pm



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