

COMMUNITY VOICE

# Governor's Veto Threat on Bill

Shows This Is Not a 'New

SUBSCRIBE FOR JUST \$4.99 a month

Why Subscribe?

# Day'

Neil Abercrombie's argument that a transparency bill will harm women is sexist.

JUNE 29, 2014 • By Carmille Lim 

Share 269

Last Monday, the governor released his intent-to-veto list. We were disappointed with what we saw: that Gov. Abercrombie does not support transparency and accountability for powerful boards.

Senate Bill 2682 was placed on the veto list. SB 2682 is critical to transparency for boards and commissions, because it would allow the public to determine if board members and commissioners might have potential conflicts of interests when businesses they are involved with come before the board or commission they serve on.

PF Bentley/Civil Beat



*The governor speaks with gubernatorial competitor David Ige's children after a recent forum during which the candidates squared off.*

This bill would require making public financial disclosure filings from certain boards and commissions that exert a high level of authority. Some of those that would be affected:

- University of Hawaii Board of Regents
- Hawaii Community Development Authority (HCDA)
- Public Utilities Commission (PUC)
- Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR)
- Land Use Commission (LUC)

At the core of the governor's 2010 campaign was his "A New Day In Hawaii: A Comprehensive Plan." Page 9 of that plan states the following:

*"There must also be transparency in government so people know that their economic interests are being represented, not just the interests of a powerful few."*

Now that SB 2682 is on the veto list, we question Gov. Abercrombie's commitment to

transparency in government. The governor has previously said that he heard from “concerned individuals” on this bill; two members of the Board of Regents have [already resigned](#) over it.

By not signing SB 2682 into law because of complaints from certain board and commission members – the few in power – wouldn't the governor be going against values highlighted in the New Day Plan?

SB 2682 passed the Legislature unanimously, yet landed on the governor's intent-to-veto list. For months, the press has reported that the governor has received complaints from “concerned individuals” despite these individuals not submitting public testimony to legislators opposing this bill during legislative session.

It is easy to wonder who these “concerned individuals” are — individuals who obviously have greater access and influence on the governor than the electorate that voted him into office.

According to media reports, these individuals are concerned about their privacy — an irony coming from people who choose to become public servants.

Public financial disclosures would ask board members to report categories such as business ownerships, income of services, creditors, real estate interests and any clients she or he represents before state agencies.

**It's sexist to assume that only women would be afraid of how this bill would affect their jobs. And, it's sexist to assume that only women would be afraid of filing public financial disclosures.**

bill will harm women.

While these forms provide greater transparency to the public, there is also some level of protection to those who file reports. Specifically, instead of reporting exact dollar amounts, filers would have to list dollar amount ranges.

A second concern the governor expressed was his belief that this

The governor has shown a track record for supporting women's rights. I appreciate that.

In this case, however, we believe the governor is sorely misguided on how SB 2682 relates to women.

In a Civil Beat interview last month, Gov. Abercrombie was quoted as saying:

“Absolutely this is going to work against women ... the discrimination against women in the workplace, is rampant. It'll be, ‘Oh, she's married to the second cousin of the guy who's the head of this department’... and someone will say it's a conflict.”

The governor — someone who has been a longtime champion of women's rights — clearly received ill advice on this bill.

His statement implies that men are by default the ones in power and sitting on these influential boards. So, not only was the advice misguided, the advice was sexist.

It's sexist to assume that women's power and influence is derived from marital relationships, especially while not saying the same of men.

It's sexist to assume that only women would be afraid of how this bill would affect their jobs. And, it's sexist to assume that only women would be afraid of filing public financial disclosures.

Various media outlets have reported that certain members of the Board of Regents have threatened to resign if this bill is signed into law. The university's chancellor, president, vice presidents, and event assistant vice presidents must file public financial disclosures. Why are their supervisors, the Board of Regents, currently exempted?

A bold leader would stand on principle and let those regents resign, and appoint replacements who understand that transparency and accountability are needed and expected when you enter public services — regardless of whether it is a volunteer or paid position.

This is especially true if you are a member of a powerful board, as are those serving as regents for a public university.

Last time I checked — before the recent resignations — there were currently only three women on the board. With resignations, we can make room for more women to serve as regents.

Seeing the public financial disclosures bill on the veto list is a huge disappointment.

It's a disappointment when it comes to the empowerment of women.

It's a disappointment for transparency in government.

Most importantly, it is a disappointment with respect to the integrity of the governor's words and campaign commitments in which he promised to make sure the people's economic interests are represented, not just the interests of a powerful few.

**Follow Civil Beat on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). You can also sign up for Civil Beat's free [daily newsletter](#).**

## About the Author



### Carmille Lim

Carmille Lim has served as Common Cause Hawaii's executive director since January 2013.

**[Use the RSS feed to subscribe to Carmille Lim's posts today](#)**



Enter your email to receive Civil Beat's free daily newsletter.

SUBMIT