



Government reform group back in isles

By Richard Borreca
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The government reform-minded organization Common Cause has returned to Hawaii for the first time since shutting local operations in 2002.

The local chapter will be led by Nikki Love, director of operations for Community Links, a nonprofit Internet social service, and a former aide to state Sen. Les Ihara.

To announce the return of the organization that was decertified in 2001, Bob Edgar, the national president and chief executive officer of Common Cause, attended the kickoff news conference yesterday at the state Capitol.

Edgar and Love said yesterday they plan to meet with Gov. Linda Lingle this week to lobby for a bill to permit a public funding option for Big Island County Council elections.

"Common Cause has a long and proud tradition working to make government work better for the public, not the special interests," Love said. "Hawaii needs Common Cause and we're back."

Love said the group will lobby to remove the influence of large donations in public elections.

"We are interested in money and its influence in politics. Also, we are looking at increased reporting for lobbyists, voting election reform and media access," she said.

Edgar, who served as a Democratic representative in Congress from Pennsylvania for 12 years, said the national Common Cause had "run out of steam and run out of money and has only recently been re-established." The Hawaii chapter was decertified in 2002 during the national group's problems.

"We are looking forward to supporting the Hawaii organizers to help improve our democratic process and restore public accountability to government at all levels," Edgar said.

Edgar will speak at a Common Cause fundraiser at 5:30 today at the Mandalay Restaurant. Interim board members for the local chapter of Common Cause include Jo Kamae Byrne, Larry Geller, Ian Lind, Love, Larry Meacham and Jim Reinhardt.

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