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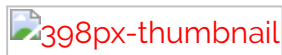
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Hawaii Gov. Neil Abercrombie Kicks And Screams As He Lets Financial Disclosure

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JULY 1, 2014 BY [ANTHONY PIGNATARO](#) — [5 COMMENTS](#)



So yesterday Governor Neil Abercrombie announced that he was rescinding his earlier

intention to veto [SB 2682](#)—which adds to the list of public officials whose Financial Disclosure Statements are considered public documents—and will let the bill become law without his signature (the bill unanimously passed the Legislature). Abercrombie had [earlier told Honolulu Civil Beat](#) that the disclosure of those forms would be detrimental to women, but [this op-ed from the League of Women Voters](#) demolishes that argument.

Still, Abercrombie couldn't help but bash the bill he's allowing to become law in a June 30 press release from his office:

“ There are tough issues to be considered in this bill with competing values: Legitimate inquiry into possible conflicts regarding the public interest versus legitimate concerns about personal information on family, finances, credit history and medical records becoming cannon fodder in political battles.”

Family and medical records? In the state of Hawaii Financial Disclosure statements? Is he serious?

This strikes me as wild and needless fear-mongering, but in at least two cases, it seems to have worked. In fact, two University of Hawaii regents—Maui Thing/Sae Designs owner Saedene Ota and Central Pacific Bank CEO John Dean—resigned in protest over the possibility that the bill would become law. In [today's Maui News](#), Ota reiterates the horrors of what Abercrombie darkly alluded to had she decided to stay a regent and let her own financial disclosure form become a public document:

“ All of our assets will be exposed... Having our families' home addresses, assets and business interests publicly displayed seems to high a price to pay in terms of the loss of privacy and potential exposure of information most people consider private... especially as we are volunteers.”

In fact, neither SB 2682 nor the current Financial Disclosure Forms used by the state Board of Ethics call for the disclosure of “families' home addresses” (to say nothing of “medical records”). While the forms do call for a list of all interests in real property held, acquired and transferred, the forms also contain the bolded phrases “EXCLUDING PERSONAL RESIDENCE(S)” in no less than three places. The bill Abercrombie is letting become law without his signature further states that “disclosure shall not be required of the street address and tax map key number of the person's residence.”

The forms themselves, while providing a picture of a state official's financial interests, in no way

provide anything like a detailed accounting of their holdings and dealings. That, as League of Women Voters Hawaii President Ann Sack Shaver put it in her op-ed I cited above, is "common sense and reasonable."

To provide an example of how little information the Financial Interests form actually provide, I randomly pulled the latest form (filed Feb. 2, 2014) from a state official—in this case, Board of Education member Grant Chun (which you can read for yourself [here](#)).

According to the form, Chun gets his income from his job as Alexander & Baldwin's Vice President of A&B Properties, and it pays him "G." That's what it says—"G."

See, the form uses Financial Amount Codes instead of printing actual salary numbers—and even then, all you get is a range instead of an actual precise figure. To figure out what "G" means, the person reading the form then has to refer to Page 3 of [this set of instructions to the form](#). In this case, "G" means that Chun's annual salary is "At least \$150,000 but less than \$250,000."

Same deal for the part of the form dealing with Creditors. In Chun's case, the form indicates that he has a loan of "H" dollars from Central Pacific Bank, of which "H" dollars are still outstanding. Referring back to the instructions, we see that "H" translates into "At least \$250,000 but less than \$500,000."

For a reporter, this is pretty thin disclosure, which is the whole point of the forms. They give members of the public a view into public officials' interests—not a detailed accounting of their assets—so we can help hold them accountable and keep them acting in the public interest.

There is great power in serving as a public official—even as an unpaid member of a body like the UH Board of Regents. Those who wish to serve should understand that public accountability is an old and vital check on that power.


Photo of Gov. Abercrombie: Sgt. Daniel Schroeder/DOD/Wikimedia Commons

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its a good incentive to pass term limits next.....the sooner you leave office, the sooner you don't have to disclose anymore. makes sense, right?

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THU 07 Karaoke with Dudley
Thursday, April 7 @ 9:00 pm - Friday, April 8 @ 9:00 pm
[Stopwatch Sportsbar and Grill](#)

THU 07 Pride Night GLBT
Thursday, April 7 @ 10:00 pm - Friday, April 8 @ 10:00 pm | \$5
[Hard Rock Cafe](#)

FRI 08 PROGRESSIVE MOJITO TASTING
Friday, April 8 @ 5:30 am - 8:30 pm | \$40
[The Banyan Tree - The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua](#)

FRI Jukebox Jangles and Free Pool All Day

08 Friday, April 8 @ 3:00 pm
[Playmakers Sports Bar](#)

FRI **Friday Island Style Seafood Buffet**
08 Friday, April 8 @ 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm
[Molokini Bar and Grille Makena Resort](#)

FRI **SUNSET DINNER**
08 Friday, April 8 @ 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm | \$50
[The Banyan Tree – The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua](#)

FRI **Maui Tastemakers Series, Maui Brewing Company**
08 Friday, April 8 @ 5:30 pm | \$90
[Japengo](#)

FRI **HARVEST MENU**
08 Friday, April 8 @ 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm
[The Banyan Tree – The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua](#)

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08 Friday, April 8 @ 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm | \$22.09
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