

HAWAII

Hawaii Media Outlets, Nonprofits Ask Ige to Improve Government Transparency

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4

Nearly two dozen Hawaii media outlets and nonprofit organizations have come together to start a dialogue with Gov. David Ige's administration about government transparency and accountability issues.

Brian Black, the executive director of The Civil Beat Law Center for the Public Interest and the organizer of the effort, delivered a jointly signed letter to Ige's chief of staff, Mike McCartney, on Friday.

The letter asks Ige to speak out strongly in favor of government transparency in light of a rising public demand for openness and "increasing public suspicion of institutions that respond to scrutiny without comment or full disclosure."

Cory Lum/Civil Beat



Nearly two dozen Hawaii media outlets and nonprofits have come together to ask Gov. David Ige to improve government transparency.

The groups — which include Civil Beat, TV stations, Hawaii Public Radio, online news outlets and good-government groups like Common Cause and League of Women Voters — are asking the governor to issue an executive memorandum or order to do three things:

1. State agencies should presume that government documents are public and invoke exceptions to disclosure only if they must, not simply because they can.
2. Each state agency should post contact information for the public to easily ascertain how to submit requests for records.
3. Requests made in the public interest should be charged, at most, only copying costs.

“The letter lays out ideas for reform for the administration to consider, but the most important thing really is having that back and forth and looking for the right solutions,” Black said.

Black started inviting the groups to come together to start a discussion about open

government in August. The idea for the letter originated during talks in October, he said. The Star-Advertiser was among the organizations that declined to participate.

Civil Beat has reported extensively about access to public records, including extreme delays in producing the records and exorbitant costs. Here's [a link](#) to a three-part series we did and other recent stories about government transparency.

Here's the letter that was delivered to the governor's office.

December 26, 2014

Honorable David Y. Ige
Governor, State of Hawai'i
Executive Chambers, State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: Open Government in the State of Hawai'i

Dear Governor Ige:

Congratulations on your election as the eighth governor of the State of Hawai'i. We, the undersigned organizations, ask that you take this occasion to speak out strongly in favor of government transparency. We have seen rising public demand for openness and increasing public suspicion of institutions that respond to scrutiny without comment or full disclosure. An executive memorandum or order implementing the following three proposals would have a profound impact on access to government information.

1. State agencies should presume that government documents are public and invoke exceptions to disclosure only if they must, not simply because they can.
2. Each State agency should post contact information for the public to easily ascertain how to submit requests for records.
3. Requests made in the public interest should be charged, at most, only copying costs.

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Frank De Giacomo

A historic occasion when twenty-two corporations agree on anything-much less left leaning ones. He did leave out a few groups that would likely sign. Just off the top of my head, I'd add Animal Rights Hawai'i, Envirowatch, and Animal Haven.

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Andy Parx

Glad to see Civil Beat's effort to get the new administration to facilitate information and document requests under the UIPA (HRS 92F).

One more thing however is imperative. There needs to be a way to file a request fully on-line. Currently one must print out a form (if you can find it), fill it in by hand and either snail mail or submit a requests in person. Providing the form in a manner that can be filled out and submitted on-line is key to facilitating the process. It's not rocket science. Plus, having one central place to submit a request to any state agency would eliminate the need ... See More

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Natalie Iwasa, Community Advocate

Let's take that a step farther. The status of requests should be updated regularly and available for everyone to see. That way, duplicate requests can be avoided, and everyone can see whether government agencies are complying with the law.

Like · Reply ·  3 · Dec 30, 2014 2:38am



Mary Pratt · Partner at Forward Films

Major kudos on this and good luck.

Also, I'm disappointed that the Star-Advertiser declined to at least comment on why it's not involved in this effort. Any insight into that?

Like · Reply ·  1 · Dec 29, 2014 4:19pm



Dajaun Jones · University of Hawai'i Maui College

ALL "NEWS ORGANIZATIONS" SHOULD BE INVOLVED...GOVERNMENT... RECORDS ARE PUBLIC RECORDS....~!!

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Makoto Lane

We'll see if he lives up to his campaign promise to label GMO food like products.

Like · Reply · Jan 5, 2015 10:06am · Edited



Dajaun Jones · University of Hawai'i Maui College

ALL "NEWS ORGANIZATIONS" SHOULD BE INVOLVED...GOVERNMENT... RECORDS ARE PUBLIC RECORDS....~!

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Bob Martin

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