

## POLITICS

# Hawaii PACs Already Busy Raising And Spending Cash

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The primary election is not until August, but it's never too soon to gear up to favor candidates with money and advocacy.

FEBRUARY 15, 2016 • By Chad Blair [Twitter](#) [Email](#) [RSS](#) Nick Grube [Twitter](#) [Email](#) [RSS](#)

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Recent political action committee filings with the state [Campaign Spending Commission](#) provide a peek into the election year ahead when it comes to how money influences campaigns.

The reports for Hawaii's 16 super PACs and 60 noncandidate committees, which include the super PACs, show who's raising and who's spending money long before most candidates for office have even filed to run.

Submitted at the end of January, the reports cover the last six months of 2015.

While that's not an election year, it is the last campaign-spending data the public will get to see until July, when reports on the January-June period are made available. That's just six short weeks before the Aug. 13 primary.

## Engineers, Realtors And Cops With Cash

The Operating Engineers Local Union 3 Statewide PAC is sitting on more than \$2.8 million in cash. Based on past history, it will almost certainly make big donations this year.

For example, the Operating Engineers gave \$6,000 to Gov. Neil Abercrombie before he lost the 2014 Democratic primary. The group then gave \$6,000 to the man who defeated the incumbent and was elected governor that year, David Ige.

The Realtors Political Action Committee of Hawaii has \$281,000 in cash.

Elected officials

getting donations from the Realtors from July to December include Honolulu City Council Chair Ernie Martin and Council member Ron Menor. State Sens. Donovan Dela Cruz and Brian Taniguchi were among dozens of members of the Hawaii Legislature who received contributions from the Realtors in the first half of 2015.



*Honolulu City Council Chair Ernie Martin.*

ILWU Hawaii Political Action Committee has \$245,600. Recipients of donations by the union include state Sen. Brickwood Galuteria, state Rep. Karl Rhoads and many of their colleagues.

The PAC representing the police union, SHOPO Political Committee, had \$219,000. SHOPO's favored candidates over the last few years include state Senate President Ron Kouchi and Darryl Perry, the Kauai chief of police who ran unsuccessfully for Kauai County Council in 2014.

Political Action Committee	Cash on Hand	Super PAC?
Operating Engineers Local Union 3 Statewide PAC	\$2,858,932.24	No
Plumbers & Pipefitters Political Action Committee	\$847,569.87	No
One Ohana Political Action Committee	\$626,986.52	Yes
Realtors Political Action Committee of Hawaii	\$280,792.16	No

ILWU Hawaii Political Action Committee	\$245,645.41	No
SHOPO Political Committee	\$219,033.86	No
United Public Workers, AFSCME, Local 646 AFL-CIO, PAC	\$179,781.26	No
Hawaii Laborers' Political Action Committee	\$171,541.35	No
Hawaii Electricians Market Enhancement Program Political Fund	\$147,106.95	No
Alexander & Baldwin, Inc. HiPAC	\$138,603.39	No
Local #1 – Political Action Committee	\$116,939.93	No
Hawaiian Telcom Good Government Club	\$101,544.12	No
Patsy T. Mink PAC	\$98,610.17	No
Hawaii Operating Transporters PAC	\$66,937.60	No
Hawaii Dental Political Action Committee	\$64,941.82	No
Central Pacific Bank State PAC aka CPB PAC – State	\$59,524.05	No
AiKea UNITE HERE	\$57,394.16	Yes
General Contractors Association of Hawaii Political Action Committee	\$49,961.00	No
Hawaii Association of Public Accountants (HAPA – PAC)	\$48,446.83	No
Hawaii Fire Fighters Association	\$38,524.16	No
Ocean Tourism Coalition PAC	\$32,549.11	No
Hawaii Medical Service Association Employee Political Action Committee	\$30,309.99	No
Subcontractors Association of Hawaii PAC	\$28,353.96	No
Hawaii Medical Political Action Committee	\$24,442.31	No

SHOPO also says it paid The Honolulu Advertiser — it almost certainly meant to say the Honolulu Star-Advertiser — \$35,500 for advertising in the last weeks of the 2014 general election.

One other influential union PAC, for the United Public Workers, AFSCME, Local 646 AFL-CIO, had \$179,000 at the end of 2015.

Those getting money from the UPW in the last few months include scores of state representatives such as Sharon Har, Jimmy Tokioka, Derek Kawakami, Jo Jordan and Isaac Choy. Honolulu City Council members Carol Fukunaga and Joey Manahan are other benefactors, as is state Sen. Breene Harimoto.

## Fighting For Maui Timeshares

[Hawaii's super PACs](#) are noncandidate committees that only make independent expenditures — that is, spending expressly to advocate for the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate, one not “in concert or cooperation” with or at the suggestion of the candidate.

Well-known PACs that have given generously to preferred candidates in recent elections include [Sierra Club Hawaii](#) (environmental advocacy), AiKea UNITE HERE (the [Local 5 labor union](#) that represents workers in the health care and hotel industries) and Forward Progress PAC (better known as [Pacific Resource Partnership](#), a top backer of Honolulu rail).



*The Hawaii State Teachers Association was one of the top spenders among local PACs in 2015.*

The local super PAC that has spent the most money in the past six months is One Ohana Political Action Committee, formerly known as Maui Timeshare Ohana Political Action Committee.

One Ohana PAC's [website states](#), "We are a coalition of timeshare owners who live on Maui. We are individuals and families who have come to embrace the Maui way of life. We are your neighbors, and friends. You see us in your stores, restaurants, on your tour boats. We sponsor charity events in the community and pitch in to clean up the beaches and keep Maui's environment pristine."

An inquiry to One Ohana PAC's chair in Las Vegas was not returned Friday, but the time-shareholders have a strong interest in supporting Maui County Council candidates. One Ohana PAC spent generously in support of three in 2014.

That was the same general election that [a voter initiative](#) on genetically engineered organisms was narrowly approved by Maui County voters, in spite of the biotech industry raising nearly \$8 million to defeat it.

A federal judge struck down the moratorium last year, but [earlier this month](#) the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals agreed to hear arguments in the case.

[One Ohana PAC's expenditure reports](#) show that it spent thousands of dollars to support Mike White, Joe Pontanilla and Kaala Buenconsejo in 2014 Maui Council races. The PAC paid for radio, print and social media advertising on behalf of the candidates as well as for political material such as mailers.



*Governor David Ige will almost certainly benefit from huge PAC donations when he runs for re-election in 2018.*



*The Plumbers & Pipefitters PAC spent more than any other local political action committee in the second half of 2015.*

As [Civil Beat reported](#), GMO was at the center of the Cochran-Buenconsejo race. Buenconsejo lost to incumbent Elle Cochran, an advocate of GMO labeling. Pontanilla lost to incumbent Don Guzman while incumbent White defeated Mike Molina.

One Ohana reported having \$627,000 in cash on hand at the end of the year, suggesting it's well-positioned to spend on the behalf of favored candidates in 2016. The \$10,000 it spent during the last half of 2015 went primarily to custodial, accounting, tax and processing services.

## **Plumbers & Pipefitters At Work**

Of the dozens of noncandidate committees registered with the Campaign Spending Commission, five reported spending much more money over the last half of 2015 as compared to the rest.

The top spender was the Plumbers & Pipefitters Political Action Committee, which

shelled out more than \$52,000, according to [its recent filing](#). Some of that went to politicians like Honolulu City Council member Ann Kobayashi and state Rep. Sylvia Luke.

But most of the money went to the Plumbers & Pipefitters parent organization in Maryland. [According to the political watchdog group Open Secrets](#), nearly 90 percent of the national group's contributions to federal candidates in 2016 are going to Democrats.

Political Action Committee	Expenditures (July 1, 2015 – Dec. 31, 2015)	Super PAC?
Plumbers & Pipefitters Political Action Committee	\$52,305.85	No
Democratic Party of Hawaii	\$50,811.44	No
HSTA Government Relations Committee (Formerly HSTA PAC)	\$41,118.63	No
Hawaii Electricians Market Enhancement Program Political Fund	\$26,704.05	No
Hawaii Republican Party	\$26,661.82	No
Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc.	\$12,700.00	No
Hawaii Dental Political Action Committee	\$12,447.92	No
Operating Engineers Local Union 3 Statewide PAC	\$10,650.00	No
Hawaii Medical Political Action Committee	\$10,500.81	No
One Ohana Political Action Committee	\$10,059.25	Yes
SHOPO Political Committee	\$5,126.10	No
Sailor's Union of the Pacific Political Fund	\$5,000.00	No
Libertarian Party of Hawaii	\$4,250.74	No
IBEW Local 1260 Voluntary Political Fund	\$4,000.00	No

Hawaii Center for Food Safety Action Fund

\$3,266.38

Yes

The local PAC appears primed to contribute a lot of money in 2016, reporting \$847,000 in cash on hand. Two years ago it gave generously to Democrats like David Ige and dozens of legislative candidates, many who prevailed in contests.

Maui Mayor Alan Arakawa and Kauai Mayor Bernard Carvalho, who hold nonpartisan seats, also received sizable donations from the Plumbers & Pipefitters.

## Democrats Vs. Republicans

The [Democratic Party of Hawaii](#) was not far behind the Plumbers and Pipefitters in terms of spending. Nearly all of it was transferred to the party's federal committee.

Contributions during the July-December period came from elected Democrats like Scott Saiki, Roz Baker, Joe Souki and Marcus Oshiro, unions like [ILWU Local 142](#) and businesses like [Alexander & Baldwin](#). Despite the contributions, the local party is \$14,600 in the red.



Cory Lum/Civil Beat

*Mayor Kirk Caldwell's re-election in 2016 will likely benefit from local PAC spending.*

state Sen. Michelle Kidani, who received \$4,000 in the first half of 2015. Kidani chairs the Senate Education Committee.

Hawaii Electricians Market Enhancement Program Political Fund spent \$26,700, mostly

The [Hawaii State Teachers Association's](#) Government Relations Committee spent \$41,000 from July through December. All of it went to staff, payroll taxes and employee welfare. The PAC is \$83,000 in the red — a deficit that was \$233,000 less than two years ago.

The HSTA gave a lot of money to a lot of candidates, including



for consulting services. In 2014, it gave \$6,000 to Ige, among other Democratic candidates.

Kirk Caldwell received \$4,000 in his successful run for Honolulu mayor in 2012. The PAC is sitting on \$147,100 in cash.

Finally, the [Hawaii Republican Party](#) spent \$26,600 for a variety of expenses ranging from food and water to lodging to accounting. The party has about \$15,900 in cash.

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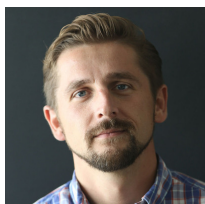


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**Rex Dubiel** · Sunset Beach, Hawaii

Thanks for the info. Whew, that's a lot of political influence!

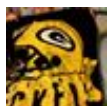
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**Chad Blair** · Works at Honolulu Civil Beat

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**Robert Manning** · Church College of Hawaii

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**Allan Robino**

I knew there was a lot of money floating around in Hawaii; but not that much. No wonder these politicians never listen to the voice of the people, it appears most are bought and paid for by these PACs

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**Elen Stoops** · UC Davis

Are these funds coming just from in-state donors? What about funds coming from out of state to influence decisions being made in Hawaii?

Thank you CB for reporting on this topic.

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

Elen, a lot of it is in-state.

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