

HAWAII

House Labor Wants Salary, Names To Remain Public

But committee recommends excluding educational background and hiring dates of government employees.

JANUARY 21, 2012 • By Chad Blair   

Share  0

Siding with advocates of government transparency, a Hawaii state House committee says the names, titles and salaries for state and county workers should remain public information.

The House Labor and Public Employees Committee on Friday rejected language in [a bill](#) that called for making private the names and exact salaries but allowed disclosure of job titles and salary ranges.

The Honolulu Police Department and the state's largest labor union, the Hawaii

SUBSCRIBE FOR JUST \$4.99 a month

[Why Subscribe?](#)

several good-government advocates including Common Cause Hawaii want them to remain public.

Committee members, led by Chair Karl Rhoads, felt there was a compelling public interest in keeping the salary data public. They also didn't hear a single example of identity theft stemming from publication of the salary info — the primary rationale for the bill.

However, Rhoads also recommended new language in HB 1356, which was adopted by the committee, that will exclude from automatic disclosure a worker's education and training background, previous work experience and first and last dates of employment

— information that is widely available in many states.

Rhoads described that information as “pretty personal and probably not all that helpful for outside analysis of what government is doing.”

HB 1356 passed unanimously with Rep. Joe Souiki voting “aye” with reservations (“I love the unions,” he explained). It now heads to House Judiciary, which hasn’t yet scheduled a hearing.

Identity Theft Concerns

State Sen. Pohai Ryan, the chief sponsor of the bill’s Senate companion, [Senate Bill 624](#), took the unusual step of testifying on the House version before Rhoads’ committee.

Explaining that she previously held two state jobs before being elected to the Senate, she said the purpose of the bill was to protect against identity theft of public employees.

“I feel they should have the same protections private sector employees enjoy,” she said. “There is no other agenda to this. Hawaii has the third-highest identity theft crime in the nation.”

Ryan said she feared an “angry neighbor” of a state worker getting a hold of employment information “and having a field day with that info.”

SB 624 has not yet been assigned a hearing in the Senate.

However, blogger and open-government advocate Larry Geller testified that the measure “threatens to chip away at the edges of public records law.”

Civil Beat has been publishing the salaries of state employees for more than a year, and language in the measure referred indirectly to those stories.

Geller said he was not aware of any consequences from Civil Beat’s publishing of salary data.

“If identity theft has not happened, and if it remains a highly accessible public database, it is a service to the community,” he said. “The difference between private and public is we pay the salaries. We don’t have concerns about private employers, but we do have concerns about how government is run.”

Another blogger and open-government advocate, Ian Lind, submitted written testimony in opposition to HB 1356.

Cheryl Kakazu Park, director of the Office of Information Practices, told the committee that “most states require this to be public, and the federal government, too.”

While not taking a position on HB 1356, Park said she believed it was too broadly written. She also noted that Civil Beat has only requested and published the name, title and salary of employees, adding that her small staff would be overwhelmed should it have to decide on a case-by-case basis on information requests about government employees.

Because no one, including the HGEA’s legislative representative, could cite a single example of identity theft that had stemmed from the publication of the salary information, Rhoads said he would strike the language about identity theft from the bill.

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

About the Author



CIVIL BEAT STAFF

Chad Blair [Twitter](#) [Email](#) [RSS](#)

Chad Blair is a reporter for Civil Beat. You can reach him by email at cblair@civilbeat.com or follow him on Twitter at [@chadblairCB](https://twitter.com/chadblairCB).

Use the [RSS feed](#) to subscribe to Chad Blair's posts today

0 Comments

Sort by **Oldest**



Add a comment...

 Facebook Comments Plugin



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

SUBMIT