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How Are 'Good Government' Bills Faring at the Ledge?

Seven died before the crossover deadline, but five other measures are moving along.

MARCH 10, 2012 • By Chad Blair   

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Every session, advocates of “good government” legislation — bills that make government more transparent and accountable, and more accessible to voters — are introduced at the [Hawaii Legislature](#).

For various reasons, many of them go nowhere; there are a lot of legislators who just don't want to change the way they do the people's business — or their own. Two bills that didn't even get a hearing would have banned fundraisers during session and forced lawmakers to file their personal financial statements at the beginning of session instead of after it was over.

This session, while seven good government bills have died (some never even got a hearing), five other bills survived last week's crossover deadline and moved from one chamber to the other.

Here's where all 12 measures stand:

Bills That Are Still Alive

[House Bill 2174](#)

What It Does Requires the Campaign Spending Commission to maintain public records

in a searchable database, and allows the commission to penalize reporting failures.

Sponsors Rep. Gil Keith-Agaran, Della Au Belatti, Chris Lee, Angus McKelvey and Karl Rhoads

Supporters The League of Women Voters Hawaii, Americans for Democratic Action Hawaii, Common Cause Hawaii (“It’s an important step to improve disclosure in response to Citizens United and other court decisions,” says executive director Nikki Love) and “numerous individuals.”

Opposition None, but the Attorney General’s Office and Campaign Spending Commission said that, while they support the bill’s intent, they have some concerns.

Status Awaits hearing in Senate Judiciary and Labor.

House Bill 1755

What It Does Allows for online voter registration.

Sponsors Introduced by House Speaker Say at the request of State Office of Elections.

Supporters Office of Elections; country clerks for Honolulu, Maui and Kauai (“An online voter registration system will modernize registration methods and perhaps encourage younger eligible voters to register,” wrote clerk Ricky Watanabe) and ACLU of Hawaii.

Opposition None.

Status Senate Judiciary and Labor [has scheduled](#) a hearing Tuesday.

Senate Bill 2859

What It Does Allows board members to hear testimony for a meeting canceled for lack of quorum, to attend informational meetings and to discuss board business via social media.

Sponsors Introduced by Senate President Shan Tsutsui at the request of the governor.

Supporters Nearly two dozen state and county agencies, the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii and the Building Industry Association of Hawaii.

Opposition One private individual.

Status Scheduled [to be heard](#) Friday by House Judiciary.

Senate Bill 2858

What It Does Creates a process for an agency to obtain judicial review of a decision made by the Office of Information Practices relating to Sunshine and open-records law.

Sponsors Introduced by Senate President Shan Tsutsui at the request of the governor.

Supporters Office of Information Practices and about a half-dozen more state agencies.

Opposition Three members of the Maui County Council.

Status Scheduled [to be heard](#) Friday in House Judiciary.

Senate Bill 2234

What It Does Eliminates the requirement to file hard-copy notices of public meetings that are posted online.

Sponsors Twenty-three state senators.

Supporters Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Office of Information Management and Technology and a half-dozen more agencies.

Opposition Three members of the County Council of Maui.

Status Referred to three House committees.

Bills That Are Dead

House Bill 2700

What It Does Amends a public-funding pilot project for the Hawaii County Council.

Sponsors Reps. Chris Lee, Sylvia Luke, Jessica Wooley and Cindy Evans

Supporters Voter Owned Hawaii (“The bottom line is that when it comes to the partial public funding program, taxpayers are losing out. We need to upgrade and modernize the program to catch up with the times,” wrote executive director Kory Payne), Common Cause Hawaii and “and numerous concerned individuals.”

Opposition Campaign Spending Commission (“The bill will increase the cost of the unfunded comprehensive public funding program,” wrote executive director Kristin Izumi-Nitao).

Status Passed House Judiciary but never received a hearing in House Finance.

Bills That Were Never Heard

Senate Bill 2954, introduced by Sen. Les Ihara: Improves reporting of lobbying and financial disclosures.

Senate Bill 2559, introduced by Ihara: Requires a legislator to file a disclosure of financial interests between Jan. 1 and Jan. 31 annually.

Senate Bill 2561, introduced by Ihara and Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland: Prohibits fundraisers for legislators during regular sessions of the Legislature.

Senate Bill 2564, introduced by Ihara, Chun Oakland and Sen. Gil Kahele: Amends the levels of anonymous contributions.

Senate Bill 2555, introduced by Ihara, Kahele and Sens. Carol Fukunaga and Maile Shimabukuro: Requires the state Ethics Commission to provide a confidential copy of board members’ most recent financial disclosures to all other members of the filer’s board and executive director.

[Senate Bill 2565](#), introduced by Ihara: Exempts from gift reporting requirements under the Ethics Code those gifts received by an elected or appointed official on behalf of the state.

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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).

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**Olin Lagon** · Honolulu, Hawaii

Mahalo for the update.

Like · Reply · Mar 13, 2012 11:30am

**Kim Coffee Isaak** · Owner at Green Dog Projects

yes, thank you Chad, this helps a lot! I've updated my tracking tool on the Hawaii Ledge site--- it's a pretty cool way to keep track of where were all at!

Like · Reply · Mar 13, 2012 11:39am

**Jared I. Kuroiwa**

For entertainment... I wrote a bunch of code to pull the CSC data from their website and place it into an API that would probably fulfill a bit of HB2174. The problem is that the data is collected from enteries by candidates and non-candidate committees, which means it isn't consistent and there are cases of things like abbreviations and misspellings.

I'll post it here if anyone wants to play with it. It's really in alpha and I'm just hosting it myself. But if there is interest, I'm sure I can find a way to scale it up.

<http://api.brchawaii.com/index.html>

Like · Reply · Mar 15, 2012 3:54am

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

Jared — thanks for the helpful post!

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