

HAWAII

Intent to Veto: What Bills Will Survive Gov. Ige's Veto Pen?

The Hawaii governor has until Monday to decide what to put on his intent-to-veto list. Still up in the air: the rail tax extension, sex trafficking and medical marijuana dispensaries.

JUNE 29, 2015 • By Nathan Eagle   

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Hawaii lawmakers sent more than 200 bills to Gov. David Ige last spring but he still has to decide what he's going to do with nearly half of them.

Legislation to establish [medical marijuana dispensaries](#), authorize the counties to levy a [surcharge on the General Excise Tax](#) and make it easier for someone to change their birth certificate so it aligns with their gender identity are among the [114 bills pending action](#) by the governor.

Monday marks the deadline for Ige to submit his list of bills from the 2015 session that he intends to veto. The session ended May 7, and the governor has [until July 14](#) to veto bills, sign them or let them become law without his signature.

Cory Lum/Civil Beat



Gov. David Ige has until the end of the day Monday to submit the list of bills he intends to veto. Ige is seen here during a press conference May 26.

Former Gov. Neil Abercrombie, Ige's predecessor, placed 11 bills on his intent-to-veto list last year. He went on to veto seven of them plus a line-item veto in the overall state budget bill, which passed.

In 2013, Abercrombie had 10 bills on his intent-to-veto list and ended up vetoing three of them, plus a line-item veto of a bill providing pay raises to union workers. None of his actions were overridden by the Legislature.

Ige's administration has been reviewing the [252 bills that cleared the Legislature](#) over the past several weeks. Of those, the governor has already [signed 137 into law](#), including bills that require Hawaii to use 100 percent renewable energy by 2045, increase the smoking age to 21 and allow for a public-private partnership with the state hospital system on Maui.

The state's methodical chief executive will more than likely sign the vast majority of the

bills on his desk, including the overall budgets for the Judiciary and Office of Hawaiian Affairs. But Ige, an engineer by trade, has said he wants to make sure each piece of legislation is carefully considered before making it law.

It's unclear where the governor stands on some of the more significant measures though, namely an extension of the tax increase funding Honolulu's \$6 billion rail project.

Ige said early and often throughout the legislative session that he needed answers to a lot of questions if he was to support Mayor Kirk Caldwell's request to extend the tax increase.

With the half-percent GET surcharge set to expire in 2022 and facing a nearly \$1 billion shortfall, Caldwell initially asked to make the tax increase permanent.

Skeptical lawmakers eventually passed a bill that would let the county, with approval from its council, extend the tax five more years.

The legislation also lets the neighbor-island counties levy a similar half-percent GET surcharge for public transportation projects and gives them the same sunset date of 2027.

The state's methodical chief executive will more than likely sign the vast majority of the bills on his desk but it's unclear where he stands on some key issues.

That bill may have a tougher time getting past Ige in light of [information that surfaced Friday](#) suggesting Caldwell misled the Legislature when lobbying for its passage.

The mayor said the extension was needed to cover the shortfall for the 20-mile route or else the county would have to look at raising property taxes by 30 percent to 43 percent. But internal emails obtained by the Honolulu Star-Advertiser show the Honolulu Authority of Rapid Transportation had estimated the city would only have to increase the median property tax by 5.6 percent.

Another bill that could find itself on Ige's intent-to-veto list deals with sex trafficking.

Hawaii has no explicit law against sex trafficking but law enforcement has used other laws to fight prostitution. The Legislature's passage of the bill making "sex trafficking" a felony was heralded by supporters in early May. But a closer look at the bill revealed a major loophole that Honolulu Prosecutor Keith Kaneshiro said would make it difficult to prosecute a pimp for exploiting a minor.

Kaneshiro was joined in his opposition to the measure by the attorney general's office, the public defender agency and a number of county police agencies, including Honolulu.

Government transparency measures are also among the bills still on Ige's desk.

One proposes [broadening an exemption](#) in the public records law to allow state and county agencies to keep certain information private if its disclosure would create a "substantial and demonstrable risk of physical harm to an individual."

Another would give \$130,000 to the Hawaii State Ethics Commission to develop and design an [electronic filing system](#) for public employees who are required to submit financial disclosure statements and for lobbyists who must file expenditure reports.

Additional legislation pending action includes measures that would:

- Make it easier to fire the [chief elections officer](#) and require performance evaluations
- [Centralize control](#) of the budget for the 10-campus University of Hawaii system
- Let the state buy [Alii Place](#), a prime downtown Honolulu office building
- Allow UH grad students to [unionize](#)
- Provide a \$6 million subsidy to the [Preschool Open Doors](#) program
- Require insurance coverage of [autism](#)
- Repeal the [ethanol requirement](#) in gas for motor vehicles

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**Bert Thomas**

Suggest the residents of Hawaii read (asap) the story of the "heavy debt" service incurred by the Puerto Rico Govt.

Hope Hawaii does not follow their ways.

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**Bobby Chang**

Where do you think the train is leading us? The train to nowhere is leading to endless debt. The p"planners" do not know what it will cost to maintain it or they are not telling us because it is no affordable.

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**Frank De Giacomo**

After signing into law extensions for the bonds for Honolulu Seawater Cooling (Omidyar project), giving charter schools some free or low cost use of public land and facilities, underwriting the bond issue for the boondoggle Anageria recycling to waste to energy facility, and underwriting a bond issues for a private catholic university (Chaminade), Governor Ige is well on his way to garnering the millions of dollars needed for his tough reelection campaign coming up.

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Bills yet to be acted upon: <http://1.usa.gov/1NuCHoS>.

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