



POLITICS

It Pays To Be An Incumbent In The Hawaii Legislature

Our chart depicts how lawmakers running for re-election have collected far more money than challengers — in most cases.

ABOUT 8 HOURS AGO • By Jaelynn Grisso  

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\$54,869

\$9,838

Mark Nakashima

Democrat

Heather Kimball

Democrat

Incumbent

Challenger

Incumbent Average

Challenger Average

Most incumbents in the Hawaii Legislature have huge campaign finance advantages this election cycle, often doubling or tripling their challengers' total contributions.

On average, through July 29 incumbents have raised about \$54,750 while the challengers have only raised about \$12,300. Of the 49 contested legislative races in this election, 42 incumbents have raised more than their challengers.

There are a few notable exceptions. Deidre Tegarden, who is running for House District 11 in South Maui, has raised about \$36,000 more than incumbent Rep. Kaniela Ing.

Out-raising an incumbent is impressive — and essential to a challenger's chances, said Colin Moore, a political science professor at the University of Hawaii Manoa.

“The fact that they’ve been able to raise a dollar more than the (incumbent) shows that they have a serious chance in the election because what it says to me is that the incumbent is probably weak,” he said. “If the incumbent is having trouble raising money, and the challenger has some success, that also indicates that the challenger has some pretty significant political backing.”

Rep. Sam Kong raised less money than his challenger, but it was by choice: He did not seek any contributions or endorsements for his campaign to continue representing District 33 in Aiea.

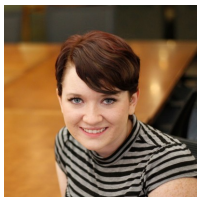
“People complain about candidates being bought or influenced, so I am a rare legislator who doesn’t follow by those rules,” Kong said. “I’m beholden to no one except my friends and neighbors, my constituents.”

Kong’s approach contrasts with many other legislators, such as Sen. Donna Mercado Kim, who has raised about \$230,000 for her re-election campaign in Senate District 14, which includes Moanalua, Aiea, Fort Shafter, Kalihi Valley and Halawa Valley.

See how other incumbents stack up to their challengers in the graphic above, which includes all contested legislative races.

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