

## POLITICS

# Kirk Caldwell's Many 'Tokens of Aloha' Came From Influential Parties

Honolulu's mayor gets many small gifts from individuals with interest in city business. Municipal ethics rules don't seem to prohibit the largesse.

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1

Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell often gets showered in mochi, manapua and mangoes. But he also gets treated to an occasional free meal or gift basket.

While some of these goodies come from colleagues on neighbor islands — such as Maui Mayor Alan Arakawa, who gave Caldwell some lychee and guri guri ice cream in June — other gifts come from well-heeled business types, a review of his gift log shows.

For instance, Max Sword, of Outrigger Hotels & Resorts, took Caldwell out for a \$125 dinner at Wolfgang's Steakhouse in April. Sword, a Honolulu police commissioner, is a registered lobbyist for Outrigger.

A stream of representatives of local developers and major rail contractors, including Stanford Carr Development, Haseko Development, R.M. Towill Corp., HDR Inc. and Ansaldo, have given Caldwell trinkets and foodstuffs ever since he took office in 2013.

PF Bentley/Civil Beat



*Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell gets lots of gifts from major players in the local business community.*

It's a perk of the position, and one that the public doesn't often hear about, because city officials [aren't required](#) by municipal ethics rules to track or report the gifts they receive during the course of business. That's not the case for state lawmakers, who must file gift logs with the state Ethics Commission.

Georgette Deemer, the city's deputy managing director, said Caldwell voluntarily tracks the gifts he receives, as recommended by the [Honolulu Ethics Commission](#). She said in an email that it's a practice the mayor carried over from his time as a state legislator.

The mayor "has kept a gift log from the days when he was an elected official in the House of Representatives and decided to continue the practice," Deemer said. "He believes it is good policy."

Civil Beat asked for Caldwell's gift log, which the city provided at no cost. *You can peruse it here:*

Honolulu's ethics law allows officials to receive up to \$200 in gifts from a single source in a year, so long as the gift giver does not have an interest in municipal business that could be influenced by the recipient, such as through the awarding of a contract.

But the ethics rules also say city officials shouldn't accept gifts under \$200 if a reasonable person would deduce that the the gift was meant to influence that official or

result in a favor.

There are exceptions, however, for what the Ethics Commission describes as “tokens of aloha.” According to the [commission’s guidelines](#), these small gifts, such as lei or food, are not believed to overly influence the decision-making process.

The city also tracks gifts it receives from foreign dignitaries who visit the islands or whom Caldwell meets while traveling abroad. Examples include silk scarves, a Gucci wallet, several aloha shirts and a papier-mache tiger doll used to ward off evil spirits.

The city’s list of gifts from dignitaries does not include any estimates of the items’ values. Deemer said these gifts are displayed or put into storage. *You can see the full list here:*



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