

HAWAII

NextEra Goes Big for Bush, But Also Gives Generously to Hawaii Democrats

The Florida company that wants to buy Hawaiian Electric spreads contributions around, and has hired four Hawaii-based lobbyists.

AUGUST 3, 2015 • By Chad Blair   

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NextEra Energy Inc., which is seeking approval to purchase [Hawaiian Electric Industries](#) for \$4.3 billion, contributed more than \$1 million to a super-PAC supporting former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush's presidential campaign.

The company, which owns the utility Florida Power & Light, donated the money to Right to Rise, [the New York Times reported](#) Saturday.

Despite going big for Bush, NextEra is also contributing to Hawaii Democrats these days.

Cory Lum/Civil Beat



NextEra Energy President Eric Gleason speaks to the Civil Beat Editorial Board last December.

In total, [NextEra spent](#) \$1.1 million in political contributions in 2014 and \$4.8 million for lobbying. This year, it has already spent \$1.2 million in lobbying, according to [OpenSecrets.org](#), the nonpartisan, nonprofit website sponsored by the Center for Responsive Politics.

In Hawaii, recipients of NextEra contributions have included U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz, [who got \\$10,000](#) from the company in the 2014 special election to serve the last two years of the late Dan Inouye's term.

The latest filings with the Federal Election Commission, which cover the April-June quarter this year, show that NextEra Energy, Inc. PAC gave \$1,000 to Schatz. U.S. Rep. Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii received \$1,250 while her colleague Mark Takai received \$2,000.

Another website that tracks political donations, [Follow the Money](#) (run by the nonpartisan, nonprofit National Institute on Money in State Politics), says other recipients of NextEra's contributions include former Gov. Neil Abercrombie, a Democrat

who received \$9,000 in his unsuccessful re-election in 2014.

NextEra has registered two non-candidate committees with the Hawaii Campaign Spending Commission, suggesting that it plans to spend more money locally.

For the general election, meanwhile, NextEra donated to Democrats David Ige and Shan Tsutsui, who received \$1,000 in their successful races for governor and lieutenant governor, respectively.

State Sen. Rosalyn Baker, who chairs the Commerce, Consumer Protection and Health Committee, received \$500 [from NextEra last year](#), while former state Rep. Denny Coffman, former chairman of Energy and Environmental Protection Committee, received \$500 in 2012. Both are Democrats.

In another indication of the company's interests in Hawaii, NextEra has four Hawaii-based lobbyists through a subsidiary called NEE Acquisition: [Mihoko Ito](#), [Mike Kido](#), [Gary Slovin](#) and [Tiffany Yajima](#). Each is experienced and has many clients — for example, they lobby for [eBay](#), which was founded by Pierre Omidyar, the publisher of Honolulu Civil Beat.

The Florida company has also registered two non-candidate committees with the state [Campaign Spending Commission](#), suggesting that it plans to spend more money locally: [NextEra Energy Transmission, LLC](#) and [NextEra Energy, Inc. Political Action Committee](#). Neither group reported any contributions or receipts in the first half of 2015, however.

Ige [said last month](#) that he opposes the company's purchase of HEI, saying it has not demonstrated that the sale would benefit consumers. The acquisition awaits a decision from the state [Public Utilities Commission](#).

But NextEra isn't giving up, and it has been active in the political world for years.

According to [Influence Explorer](#), run by the nonpartisan, nonprofit [Sunlight Foundation](#), NextEra spent more than \$5.1 million in campaign financing from 1989 through the

middle of 2014. More than \$4.6 million of that amount was spent at the state level.

NextEra also spent [more than \\$19 million](#) in lobbying over the same period.

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Frank De Giacomo

Good job with the research! I think the moral of the story is that Next Era needs to contribute more this election cycle. They should be good for at least \$250,000, so Dems are doing try, wait. Although on the take, Hawaii tends to be able to be swayed for relatively small amounts of money compared to many other states, but Next Era only spent about \$30,000 in the state by your numbers so Next Era definitely needs to up it's game if it wants Hawaii's monopoly.

Too bad we don't have voter owned elections so that Next Era couldn't become the energy baron of Hawaii. Maybe decentralized power production will be placed in the hands of the masses and then Next Era will be left holding a worthless grid in the final analysis. We shall see.

As long as we're on energy influence buying you should check out: Anaergia Inc., Sunstrong, Kamaoa Wind Energy Partners, and Pelatron Q, LLC. All taking taxpayers for potentially costly rides.

Like · Reply · [5](#) · Aug 3, 2015 11:23pm · Edited



Robert C. La Mont

One million for Bush and \$500 for Rosalyn Baker? Boy, I'd feel pretty insulted if I were her!

Like · Reply · [1](#) · Aug 4, 2015 9:40am

Like · Reply ·  1 · Aug 4, 2015 2:49am**Karen Chun** · Game Developer at Redwood Games

Let's see how she votes. It took Monsanto a couple thousand and throwing her a fundraiser party to lock in her vote against the various anti-GMO initiatives that the voters passed.

Like · Reply · Aug 19, 2015 4:46pm

**Ron Whitfield** · Honolulu, Hawaii

Run these scum out of town now!

Like · Reply ·  3 · Aug 4, 2015 2:56am**John Bond**

Hawaii politicians have always been known for cheap and easy buyouts...

NextEra can own the Hawaii legislature and City Council for a fraction of the price in Florida, etc.

Like · Reply ·  4 · Aug 4, 2015 4:31am**Robert Manning** · Church College of Hawaii

Nester Garcia is one of the cheapest buyouts.

Like · Reply · Aug 4, 2015 11:14am

**William White** · Co-Founder & CTO at Fluence

Headline is very misleading. Democrats getting a few pennies relative to Bush contribution is hardly "generous".

Like · Reply · Aug 4, 2015 4:59am · Edited

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

Thanks, William, you have a point.

Like · Reply ·  1 · Aug 4, 2015 10:55am**Patricia Blair** · University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Good bye Next Era!

Like · Reply ·  1 · Aug 4, 2015 9:02am**George M. Lee** · Clergy (retired) at The Episcopal Church in Hawai'i

In Florida they gave Jeb Bush a million dollars and he advised the utilities commission to grant rate increases for NEX ERA. Why should Hawaii let them play their game here. What is in it for me/us.

Like · Reply ·  1 · Aug 4, 2015 9:41am**Karen Chun** · Game Developer at Redwood Games

They also wrote laws discouraging rooftop solar. When I first started out in Solar Energy in the 70's Florida Light and Power was way ahead of the country on renewable energy. Then NextEra bought them and even though Florida has a great climate for solar, their record is DISMAL.

NextEra is not a good company.

Like · Reply · Aug 19, 2015 4:48pm

**Robert Manning** · Church College of Hawaii

Too bad Iwase isn't running for anything...They didn't give Ige anything. Maybe that's why he dumped Nextera...

Like · Reply · Aug 4, 2015 11:16am

**Karen Chun** · Game Developer at Redwood Games

Isn't Iwase running the PUC? Overseeing one of the most important decisions ever? (The NextEra buyout)

Like · Reply · Aug 19, 2015 4:47pm

**Ed Wagner**

When is the bribery of our politicians going to stop? Nextera has overstayed its welcome. It's vacation is over. Time to send it back to the Florida Everglades where it belongs with the rest of the alligators.

Like · Reply ·  1 · Aug 4, 2015 12:33pm**Scott Foster** · Honolulu, Hawaii

No need to tell them to "turn off the lights" when they leave. HECO will likely do that for "us" unless the money is found to do all that's needed to upgrade the grid and old school power plants. Anyone else knocking at our door yet? Be very careful for what you wish. WE all might get your wish. What will that new "smart grid" cost exactly?

Like · Reply ·  1 · Aug 4, 2015 2:08pm**Ed Wagner**

Scott Foster Better to deal with the devil you know that the devil you don't know. We don't need to upgrade HECO's centralized grid. We need a whole new micro-grid and nano-grid system to be more efficient, more secure, more resilient. Too much power is lost over HECO's grid. Such power losses won't occur on micro-nano grid systems of the future.

According to Governor Ige, yes, others are knocking on the door, but the handwriting is on the wall. The people are rightfully demanding public, non-profit power to reach our goals.

If the PUC had done its job the past 102 years, we would have ha... See More

Like · Reply ·  1 · Aug 9, 2015 6:24pm**Karen Chun** · Game Developer at Redwood Games

Scott Foster HEI pay a ton of money to its stockholders every year like clockwork. They could have been using a big chunk of that to modernize all these years. They STILL can use it.

Like · Reply · Aug 19, 2015 4:50pm

**Malcolm Mackey**

How about contributing that money in the community toward education, affordable housing, homeless instead of to politicians and lobbying.

Like · Reply · Aug 4, 2015 10:19pm

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