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ON POLITICS

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Outside interests muddying Hawaii's political waters

By Richard Borreca

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Oct 26, 2010

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We call elections the "silly season," but this year we should call it the "spending silly season."

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Never has so much money been spent to say such nasty things about so few.

If you have a mailbox in the 1st Congressional District, you already know that Charles Djou ruined the economy, actively killed jobs and is now trampling our schools.

And you have learned that Colleen Hanabusa is a tax-and-spend tsunami intent on strangling our economy with job-killing regulations.

How could we have ever elected this despicable pair in the first place?

Negative advertising is fueled by the big political action committees. There's more of it this season, thanks to the U.S. Supreme Court decision in January to free up corporate

and union money.

Just in Hawaii, the Republican Governors Association has spent \$1 million to prepare and broadcast its "Rise and Shine" ads for GOP Lt. Gov. James "Duke" Aiona.

In the race for Congress, besides the Hawaii GOP involvement, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the Republican National Committee, the National Rifle Association and the Hawaii State AFL-CIO have all been playing in our political waters.

"Candidates have told me that every dollar spent on a positive ad is a wasted dollar in 2010," Larry Sabato, director of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia told Yahoo News.

"Huge campaign money in 2010 is the latest sad example of Hawaii's future being shaped by outside forces," says Nikki Love, executive director of Common Cause Hawaii.

This year candidates are welcoming the outside help. Aiona must beam a bit brighter whenever the "Rise and Shine" spot hits the air. But, there is another side to those ads.

The outside ads must not be coordinated with the candidate, so the candidate can't control the outside interest group's message.

You may not want to be endorsed by the NRA or you may not want a gambling and casino group wandering around your campaign.

Love warns that "big campaign money is changing the entire course of our public policy. First, big donors get access and influence that ordinary citizens don't have. Second, elected officials fear being attacked by well-funded special interest groups."

Today the result is that voters are the pawns. Come the 2012 election and beyond, Hawaii's politicians will be the pawns of mainland and international interests we could never control.

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