

Hawaii

# Senate Kills Effort To Lift Limits On Public Land Leases

The Legislature also approved the state budget with billions of dollars for capital improvement projects statewide.

9

---

By Anita Hofschneider    / May 2, 2017

Share 486

Share 3

---

The Hawaii Senate killed a bill Tuesday that would have allowed the state to lease land in perpetuity.

[House Bill 1469](#) raised alarm on social media Tuesday and among environmental organizations who feared it [would allow the state](#) to give away public land, particularly conservation land on Mauna Kea for the purpose of building telescopes.

Senate President Ronald Kouchi said that the Senate agreed to kill the bill after a “spirited discussion” in caucus.



Senate President Ron Kouchi at the Tuesday morning session. He called the closed-door discussion of HB 1469 “spirited.”

The proposal was among more than 100 that the House and Senate separately considered Tuesday. The most [dramatic discussions](#) revolved around the funding mechanism for Honolulu’s beleaguered rail project.

The House and Senate also approved the state budget, which Sen. Jill Tokuda said was about \$145 million less than what Gov. David Ige requested. The state’s Council on Revenues lowered its projections for tax revenue after the legislative session began, forcing lawmakers to make more cuts than previously anticipated.

The budget sets aside more than \$28 billion in operating funds over the next two years, in addition to nearly \$3 billion for capital improvement projects.

A bill to criminalize trespassing on state lands passed the Legislature despite criticism from organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union, which claimed the measure was targeting demonstrators who camped out on Mauna Kea to oppose further telescope construction.

Sen. Russell Ruderman said that his fellow lawmakers might regret voting for [Senate Bill 895](#), which he said would intimidate protesters.

“We should think about who our president is ... we might all agree that someday we might want to have the right to protest,” he said.

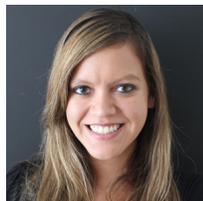
The Legislature also approved a bill to decriminalize drug paraphernalia. Under [House Bill 1501](#), possession of anything that’s used to grow, store, ingest or otherwise use controlled substances will be subject to no more than a \$500 fine.

Thursday is the last day of this year’s legislative session. After that, lawmakers aren’t scheduled to meet again until January.

[Click here for a full list of bills that passed the Legislature.](#)

Follow Civil Beat on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). You can also sign up for Civil Beat’s free [daily newsletter](#).

## About the Author



Anita Hofschneider [Twitter](#) [Email](#) [RSS](#)

Anita Hofschneider is a reporter for Civil Beat. You can reach her by email at [anita@civilbeat.org](mailto:anita@civilbeat.org) or follow her on Twitter at [@ahofschneider](https://twitter.com/ahofschneider).

[Use the RSS feed to subscribe to Anita Hofschneider's posts today](#)

SHOW COMMENTS



## IGNORANCE IS ~~BLISS~~ TOXIC.

Get Civil Beat's free morning newsletter to stay informed.

SIGN ME UP!

And don't worry, we hate spam too! You can unsubscribe any time.