



Volcanic Ash

Totally independent, slightly irreverent, hopelessly idealistic

« Don't cross Abercrombie with independent thought

Will a higher threshold make the pension tax palatable? »

Senators fight for the right to freeload

Update: Final reading on SB 671 was delayed 48 hours after the Senate **amended it again** today to limit the free tickets public officials can accept to fundraisers of IRS 501(c)(3) organizations (public charities and private foundations). Language was deleted that would have also allowed free admission to events sponsored by non-charitable tax-exempt groups such as chambers of commerce, trade associations and labor unions.

The hearty appetite of Hawai'i legislators for free meals and other goodies is an issue that won't seem to die this session.

Common Cause put out an alert that a **new version of SB 671**, which it dubs the "Gifts Law," is up for final reading in the Senate today.

The latest draft strips out language that would have allowed lawmakers and other public officials to accept or even solicit gifts worth up to \$200 from just about anybody seeking to influence their actions.

But the new version would still allow legislators to accept free admission to charitable events, even if the provider of the gift isn't the host of the event.

Presumably, the freebies would apply not only to the ubiquitous fundraising dinners, but also to charitable events such as golf tournaments, wine tastings

and fashion shows.

And the legislation broadly defines a “charitable entity” to go well beyond the social service organizations we usually think of charities to include business groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, trade associations and labor unions — all of which have lobbying interests before the Legislature that are far from charitable.

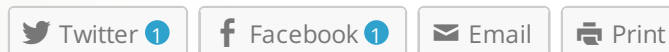
It’s a back door that allows special interests of virtually all kinds to wine and dine legislators from whom they are seeking officials favors, and there’s no credible argument that it’s in the public interest to allow such freebies to be offered or accepted.

Also difficult to swallow is the aversion our lawmakers have to paying their own way into charitable events like everybody else.

It doesn’t even have to come out of their own pockets; they pushed a campaign spending law amendment a few years years ago to allow elected officials to cover charitable donations from their campaign funds.

[About these ads](#)

Share this:



Loading...

Related

Legislators give up
their fight for
freebies — for now
In "Volcanic Ash"

Legislators fight for
the right to freeload
(cont'd)
In "Volcanic Ash"

Hawai'i lawmakers
hunger for free meals
In "Volcanic Ash"

Explore posts in the same categories: [Volcanic Ash](#)

This entry was posted on March 8, 2011 at 12:03 am and is filed under [Volcanic Ash](#). You can subscribe via [RSS 2.0](#) feed to this post's comments.

Tags: [ethics](#), [Legislature](#)

Both comments and pings are currently closed.

5 Comments on "Senators fight for the right to freeload"

hipoli Says:



March 8, 2011 at 6:50 am

I went to one of these types of events recently. Whereas in the past the room was filled with many politicians, on this night, there was one legislator, who wanted to support the non-profit and as such, dutifully paid for her ticket, without complaint. I thought that was just awesome.

Once, at a late hour of hearings, I tried to bring food to Marcus Oshiros office and was turned away. I was told he doesnt accept any gifts. I thought that was just awesome, too.

I know of many legislators who pay for tables and various tickets for events that they support, most especially in their districts.

So we know it can be done, right?

Seems to me that this measure does not pass the sniff test. The old days and old ways are changing, right? Lets rebuild the respectability of the Legislature, one meal

ticket at a time.

WooWoo Says:

March 8, 2011 at 8:02 am

What Hipoli said.

RichardGozinya Says:

March 8, 2011 at 9:23 am

While assuring their access to the trough, these porkers scheme to increase taxes and spending. Aiyah. My wallet is starting to feel like a charitable entity.

Michael Says:

March 8, 2011 at 10:40 am

In other words a Bribe is still a Bribe.
I would not accept food from anyone if it doesn't smell right.

Kolea Says:

March 9, 2011 at 7:55 pm

The bill has a defected effective date. The intention is for the bill to be worked out in conference committee. Hee said explicitly during the Senate hearing that he would not advance the bill in a form opposed by the Ethics Commission.

The current version is NOT consistent with the advice Les Kondo gave in his "off the cuff" exchange with Hee during the hearing. The Commission will be meeting soon (I cannot see a meeting date on their website) and will undoubtedly take the matter up at that meeting. Which will allow time for their views to become known before the bill is finalized.

The groups who have been leading the fight against relaxing the restrictions, Common Cause, the League of Women Voters and Americans for Democratic Action, should make it a point to attend that meeting and testify during the public comment period.

Comments are closed.

Blog at WordPress.com. The Sapphire Theme.

 Follow