HAWAII

Takai Outpaces Gabbard in Fundraising — Barely

Hawaii's two U.S. representatives have campaign war chests that might discourage challengers.



Hawaii's freshman in the U.S. House of Representatives, Mark Takai, <u>raised \$234.335 in the most recent fundraising cycle</u> — more than Hawaii's other House delegate, Tusi Gabbard.

But not by much.

Gabbard raised just \$129 dollars less than Takai — or \$234,206 — for the <u>July-September reporting period</u>.

Gabbard, a sophomore who represents Hawaii's 2nd congressional District, also has three times the cash on hand as Takai, the 1st District congressman — \$1.4 million as compared with \$462,000.



U.S. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi speaks after Rep. Mark Takai was sworn in at Honolulu's Federal Courthouse in January.

Less than 10 months from the August 2016 primary, and with no declared challenger yet in sight for either candidate, both Democrats appear to be facing easy re-election.

Takai <u>spent \$1.7 million</u> in a crowded primary and a close general election two years ago, while Gabbard <u>spent \$858,000</u> in an unopposed primary and in a general she won with 76 percent of the vote.

Asked if Hawaii's House reps would face credible challengers in 2016, political analyst John Hart laughed.

"I think for those of us that follow politics in Hawaii, we just went through a banner year, a unique year, recently," said Hart, chair of Hawaii Pacific University's Communications Department. "We had an open governor's seat, an open House seat, an open Senate seat and a guy from Hawaii running for president. But we are not going to see that again."

Hart characterizes the 2016 U.S. House races as "a return to normalcy."

"I do not see a CD 2 challenger or a CD 1 challenger," he said. "At this point, I don't even see a challenge for governor (in 2018). The only possible interesting race is for Honolulu mayor."



U.S. Rep. Tulsi Gabbard was sworn into Congress at the start of 2013 by the body's top Republican, John Boehner.

Thus far, Kirk Caldwell has yet to attract a formal opponent, but he's been busy <u>raising lots of cash</u> in case he does. The other big races for next year are the Hawaii County mayor's race, which is open, and U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz's re-election.

Gabbard and Takai drew from similar money pools in the third quarter fundraising cycle, notably from political action committees for labor unions, which is not unusual for

Democrats in a blue state like Hawaii.

Defense contractors also gave generously, which is also not unusual given Hawaii's dependence on the military and the fact that Gabbard and Takai are both veterans and minority members on the House Armed Services Committee.

Both also received money for the 2016 election from <u>VoteVets.org</u>, which backed them in 2014. Other notable contributors include NextEra Energy for Takai (\$1,000) and Walter Dods Jr., the chair of Matson's board who contributed \$5,400 to Gabbard.

Gabbard also received \$2,700 from the Hindu American Political Action Committee (Gabbard is the only Hindu in Congress) and \$28,000 from the Schatz Gabbard Re-Election Fund. The senator <u>hosted a fundraiser</u> for the congresswoman in April in Kailua, squelching any talk that she might run against him. Hawaii's reps also spent money to get advice on raising money.

"When you look at Mark Takai, you can see that he could retire in that seat." — HPU Professor John Hart

For Gabbard, that included \$7,543 to Campaign Finance Group — a fundraising consultant group — and \$9,807 to Anne Lewis Strategies — an Internet communications consultant — both

with offices in Washington, D.C. Takai paid \$6,000 to Eckert Associates, also of D.C.

Takai, who said he is grateful for the contributions he has received so far, said he paid for the fundraising consulting because he wants his campaign to be prepared.

"The focus is on making sure we put ourselves in the best position looking 10 months away," he said. "The consultants are a needed — it was proven in my last race. Our focus is to raise the necessary funds needed to be competitive and to make sure we give ourselves the best chance."

Takai said he had not heard whether he has has potential opponents or who might be.

Hart, the HPU professor, said he was not surprised to learn that Takai was seeking financial advice.

"This is a job that someone could hold for life, if they choose to do so — ask Neil Abercrombie," he said, referring to the former governor who spent nearly 20 years in Washington in the House. "When you look at Mark Takai, he would seem to be as good a fit for that. You can see that he could retire in that seat."

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