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Hawaii News

Trump spurs Hawaii lawmaker to draft tax-returns bill

By [Sophie Cocke](#)

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Hawaii state Rep. Chris Lee talks about a bill he's proposing to require presidential candidates to release tax returns on Wednesday in Honolulu.

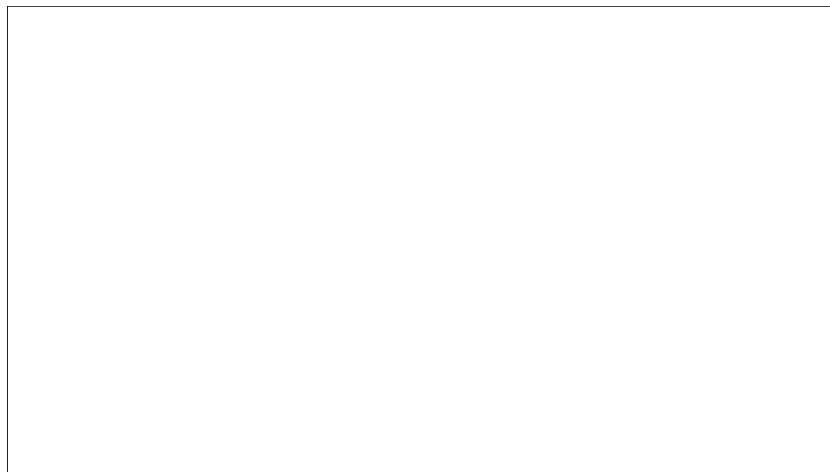
State Rep. Chris Lee plans to introduce a bill this legislative session that would require future presidential candidates to release their tax returns if they want to be placed on the ballot in Hawaii, a reaction to President-elect Donald Trump's ongoing refusal to

release his tax information — breaking a decadeslong bipartisan tradition among presidential candidates.

Lawmakers in other states, including California, New York, Massachusetts and Maine, are looking at similar measures.

“At today’s press conference, we were disappointed to see President-elect Trump’s continued refusal to release his tax returns and meaningfully address his conflicts of interest, especially since he’s been filling his administration with political insiders, corporate executives, and his immediate family who run his companies (and) have been sitting in on meetings with foreign heads of state,” Lee said in a news release, referencing Trump’s Wednesday press conference in New York, his first since winning the presidency.

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“We are joining together with elected leaders in other states to require all future candidates for president to make their tax returns public to ensure that future presidents, whether Democrat or Republican, won’t be making decisions that benefit themselves at the expense of taxpayers.”

Individual tax return information is private under federal law, but it has become commonplace for presidential candidates to publicly release this information, which provides information about business dealings, potential conflicts of interest, charitable giving, and how aggressive a candidate may have been in limiting tax liabilities.

Trump is the first major party nominee since former President Gerald Ford not to release his tax returns.

TRUMP reiterated at Wednesday’s press conference that he would not release his tax returns because they are still being audited by the Internal Revenue Service, a position

he maintained throughout the presidential campaign. (The IRS has said that an audit doesn't bar an individual from releasing personal tax information.)

Trump's comments on Wednesday also raise questions about whether he will release the information once the audit is complete. The president-elect said the public doesn't care about the matter.

"You know, the only one that cares about my tax returns are the reporters, OK? They're the only ones," Trump said.

A reporter pressed the issue: "You don't think the American public is concerned about it?"

"No, I don't think so," said Trump. "I won. I mean, I became president. No, I don't think they care at all. I don't think they care at all."

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