



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Labor & Public Employment
and
House Committee on Lower & Higher Education
Monday, March 18, 2019 at 2:10 p.m.

By
Joyce Najita, Director
Industrial Relations Center
Dr. Monica Ghosh, Interim University Librarian
University of Hawai'i Library Services
And
Dr. Laura Lyons
Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HCR 179/HR 161 – REQUESTING THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII BOARD OF REGENTS TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT AND FUND THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CENTER AS A VALUABLE LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS RESOURCE FOR THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS.

Chairs Johanson and Woodson, Vice Chairs Eli, Hashem and Perruso, and members of the committees:

The Industrial Relations Center (IRC), University of Hawai'i at Mānoa provides the following comments in support of HCR 179/HR 161 for your consideration. My name is Joyce M. Najita, Director of the Industrial Relations Center, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

There is a genuine concern among members of the greater labor relations community in Hawai'i from both the human resources management and organized labor communities over the steady decline in support for the fields of human resources management and industrial relations both locally and nationally. It is the spirit of this concern that was the primary motivation for the Resolution. This specific resolution is designed to support the Industrial Relations Center as we move into the future. The issues that the IRC addresses involve the very future of work, the future of labor, and the future of labor-management relations. The University of Hawai'i Board of Regents founded the Industrial Relations Center in 1948 for these purposes. For these reasons, the Industrial Relations Center supports the approval of this Resolution, which requests that the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents continue to support and fund the Industrial Relations Center as we move into the future.

The Industrial Relations Center (IRC) has provided service to the private and public sectors, including both management and labor in Hawai'i for 70 years. In 2020, the 50th anniversary of the Hawai'i Collective Bargaining in Public Employment law will have been reached. Both management and labor in the field of labor relations needs a research arm that is impartial to the respective interests of both sides of human resources/labor. The neutrality of the Industrial Relations Center with respect to labor-management relations has been at the core of the IRC's founding mission since 1948.

It is evident that labor relations has not faced such grave problems since the 1930s. This current climate of concern for and problems facing industrial relations as a whole comes from all levels: the United States Supreme Court, the National Labor Relations Board, additional federal and state/county agencies, labor unions and human resources management staff. It is within this context that questions over the survival of the Industrial Relations Center have been raised. Interested parties in the local community have been so concerned that they have sought to strengthen the commitment to preserve the Industrial Relations Center so that it is available to all parties that have a vested interest in preserving a strong and viable labor-management community in Hawai'i.

The IRC's mission is to promote understanding of labor-management problems, techniques, and policies; and to provide for labor, management, and the community sources of information in the field of industrial relations.

Originally established in the College of Business Administration, the IRC is now an independent organized research unit administered under Library Services. The value of the IRC's neutral position was aptly described in 1970 by J. B. Ferguson, former Director of the IRC, when he said that having separate education programs for labor and management "...tends to perpetuate the polarization between management and labor by emphasizing the differences between them rather than emphasizing their mutual interdependence in today's world. Techniques for easing and avoiding conflict seem to be of greater importance, given present laws and existing attitudes, than do techniques which perpetuate antagonism...."

Over the years, the IRC has established a reputation as an impartial and trusted resource agency in the highly adversarial field of labor-management relations in both the public and private sectors.

The IRC is a member of a national organization of professionals in the industrial relations field called the Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA), as well as its Hawai'i Chapter. LERA was previously known as the Industrial Relations Research Association (IRRA), and the Hawai'i Chapter of LERA has maintained the IRRA designation. As a service to the industrial relations community, the IRC provides administrative services to the IRRA-Hawai'i Chapter.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the IRC's comments in support of HCR 179 and HR 161.