



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

H.B. 972, HD1
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance

February 24, 2005

By

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Professor/Director of Internship Program
Department of Political Science
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Chair Takamine, Vice Chair Kawakami and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 972, HD 1 which appropriates funds for the Legislative Intern Program. The University of Hawai'i supports the intent of this bill, so long as it does not interfere with the priorities determined in the Board of Regents approved biennium budget.

The Legislative Intern Program began in the early 1950's funded by a Ford Foundation Grant. Its purpose then and now is to provide the opportunity for undergraduate students to enhance their education in public affairs through direct participation in the legislative process. When funding from the Ford grant expired in the mid 1960's, the program developed funding from the State of Hawaii. Currently located in Outreach College at UH Manoa, the program supports 12 interns from UHM and 3 from West Oahu, 15 total per year. In 1989, the Legislature authorized funds for a UH faculty position dedicated to overseeing the internship on a permanent basis in addition to other duties.

Currently, interns receive a stipend during the legislative session of \$1500, an amount set in 1984. They work an average of 35 hours per week plus extended days on the major legislative crossovers for about \$3.50 per hour. In addition, they pay \$1700 in tuition. In recent recruitment efforts, it has become clear that many potential interns must forego participation in the program because this small stipend does not off-set income which they would derive from part-time jobs to pay the costs of their education. In light of the number of hours of service expected of interns as well as the academic load of 15 credits which they carry at the same time, they cannot realistically hold part-time jobs. Those who are parents of small children face additional time demands. While it is clear that the intent of the program is largely academic, it is also clear that the program should be supported by a stipend sufficient to maintain interns during their time of service.

It is therefore proposed that stipends for legislative interns be raised from the current rate of \$1500 per semester to \$3000. At the current rate of actual service, this translates to an hourly wage equivalent to that of other student employees on campus. The total cost of this stipend for the 15 student interns

would be \$45,000, not including the employer contribution to FICA. It is believed that a stipend of this magnitude would permit competitive recruitment for the program and result in sustained higher quality individuals being selected for the internship program.

The following amendments to the bill are recommended:

- The locus should be changed to the University of Hawai'i Outreach College instead of the College of Social Sciences.
- The funds will be effective for the 2006 legislative session, instead of the 2005 legislative session.