

Downtown-Chinatown Neighborhood Board – May 1, 2025

Senator Karl Rhoads

Last meeting: April 3, 2025

I introduced the following 10 Bills which passed through the Legislature this Session:

Senate Bill (SB) 112 (Act 17): This bill allows immediate family members of persons whose deaths were investigated by law enforcement to receive the police department's closing report after a certain period of time. It balances the privacy rights of individuals and the interest of law enforcement to be able to investigate cold cases, with the family's needs for information and closure about what happened to their loved one.

SB 116 allows victims of discriminatory reports to law enforcement to sue the reporting party for damages. These reports occur when a person calls police on someone based on their protected characteristics, and without reason to suspect a crime has been committed.

SB 121: As Chair of the Judiciary Committee, I am responsible for vetting judges. Currently, the Senate has only 30 days to act on a judicial appointment made by the Governor. This bill proposes a constitutional amendment to give the Senate an additional thirty days to vote on judicial appointments made between April and December, which will hopefully reduce the need for the Senate to convene special sessions just to vote on judges. The question will be on the ballot in November 2026 for voters to decide. Please be aware that leaving this question blank will be considered a no vote.

SB 176: In state and county elections, automatic recounts only happen when the winner is decided by less than 100 votes, or one-quarter of 1% of all votes cast in that race, whichever is fewer. As a result, very few races, including very close races where the winner was decided by only a few votes, have qualified for a recount. This bill raises the threshold to the lesser of 100 votes or one-half of 1% of all votes cast in that race, which is the national standard.

SB 304 provides funding to the Adult Client Services Branch of the First Circuit Court, which handles probation on O‘ahu, to cover operating expenses and create jobs for eight probation officers, two clerks, and one social worker.

SB 344 requires children under the age of 18 to wear a helmet while skateboarding on public property.

SB 405: This bill allows neighborhood boards to discuss and receive information on third-party reports from government officials, even if the report isn't on the public agenda. If the board wants to make a decision on issues raised in the third-party report, it must give notice and do so at a later meeting.

SB 428: This bill raises the fees paid to witnesses attending trials from \$4 to \$30 per day of attendance in court, and increases the mileage reimbursement for travel expenses. The daily fee was last raised over 50 years ago, and the mileage reimbursement has not changed since 1925. These increases will help ensure that justice can be served by making it more economical for witnesses to come to court.

SB 1522 provides a legal defense to vehicle owners who have transferred the vehicle's title but may still be responsible for legal harms related to that vehicle. So long as the owner has completed their side of the title transfer, they will not be held liable for any violations or damage.

SB 1651 requires agency board packets to be posted at least three full business days before public meetings, closing a loophole in the law that some agencies were using to post board packets with less than two full days of public review.

Please don't hesitate to call my office, (808) 586-6130, with questions or concerns or email me at: senrhoads@capitol.hawaii.gov