

THE PUBLIC



# Employee

Advocating For You:  
**Legislative  
Action Gets  
Results**

PAGE 7

**Janus v. AFSCME  
Council 31: An  
Attack on Unions**

PAGE 3

**Unit 14  
Arbitration  
Update**

PAGE 4

**State Law  
Enforcement on  
Hawaii Island**

PAGE 12

*HGEA Members Helen  
Hamada (Unit 8) and  
Ricki Aikau (Unit 3)*

HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION | AFSCME LOCAL 152, AFL-CIO

MARCH 2018 | VOLUME 53 | ISSUE 1

# Message from the Executive Director



Helping working families is what HGEA is all about. In this edition of *The Public Employee* you will read about how HGEA was able to push and see passage of legislation that expands family leave for workers to include siblings. Good legislation often comes from real-life situations and needs. In this case, two of our members — Helen Hamada and Ricki Aikau — had siblings with health conditions that required much care from their families. As they talked to co-workers, they discovered this was a larger issue and they decided to try to do something about it. It wasn't quick or easy to get the bill passed, but ultimately we were successful.

This is just one example of the many ways unions advocate for working families. We don't always succeed, but we never give up the fight. Unions are the voice of working people. Our purpose is to work together for the greater good — not just for our members, but for the benefit of our communities.

As you may recall, in our most recent contract negotiations, the employer offered 0 percent raises. Most units went to arbitration and received a substantially better increase. We worked to ensure the funding bill passed before the end of the legislative session, which allowed pay increases to begin effective July 1, 2017, at the start of the new contract.

In order to do our job as your union — to negotiate contracts, represent employees in the workplace, interpret the contracts, protect your vacation, sick leave and other benefits — government employees pay a fair share fee to HGEA to cover the costs for these services. However, things may change as it is anticipated that by the end of June, the U.S. Supreme Court will render a decision in a case that could negatively impact the way public unions provide services to members. That case is *Janus v. AFSCME*, which you can read about in this issue. This case can only weaken our union's ability to fight on your behalf if many members decide to quit the union. We hope you continue to stand with HGEA as your voice and advocate — together, we will be stronger.

In solidarity,

Randy Perreira  
HGEA Executive Director

THE PUBLIC  
*Employee*

THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEE is published by the Hawaii Government Employees Association, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Local 152, AFL-CIO.

P.O. Box 2930  
Honolulu, HI 96802-2930  
(808) 543-0000  
[www.hgea.org](http://www.hgea.org)

**Randy Perreira**  
Executive Director  
  
**Jodi Endo Chai**  
Deputy Executive Director

**Caroline Sluyter**  
Communications Officer  
  
**Jenny C.S. Nakagawa**  
Senior Communications Specialist

**Lariel Q. Sato**  
Communications  
Specialist

# Update on Janus v. AFSCME Council 31

*A case designed to eliminate your worker rights and protections*



## **What is the Janus case about and why should union members care?**

*Janus v. AFSCME Council 31* is a lawsuit before the U.S. Supreme Court that seeks to weaken the power of working people in the public sector to join together to form strong unions.

## **Does it matter if our union is strong?**

Unions are the advocate of working people. HGEA's mission is protecting and advancing members' rights and benefits. From fighting for a fair contract, to protecting established worker rights, to making sure our members' voices are heard, HGEA is working for you. Union power comes from the collective strength of all of our 42,000-plus members standing together. The rights and benefits government workers enjoy today came from many years of working to pass laws and negotiate contracts for our eight bargaining units. Each time contracts come up for negotiation, the employers seek takeaways and/or reductions in benefits. In addition, HGEA fights bills that would harm workers and works hard to pass legislation that helps all working families, such as the expansion of family leave to include siblings (*see "Advocating for You: Legislative Action Gets Results," page 7*).

## **How can a case before the U.S. Supreme Court affect me here in Hawaii?**

If the court decides in favor of Janus, it will make so-called "right-to-work" (RTW)

the law across the nation, including here in Hawaii. Deceptive "right-to-work" laws hurt everyone. By many measures, the quality of life in states with RTW is lower. Wages are lower, poverty levels are higher, and people are less likely to have health insurance. In a RTW situation, your union is still required to provide you with union services such as contract negotiation, representation, contract enforcement and legislative monitoring and lobbying — however, people may opt out of paying their fair share for these services and benefits. Is this fair? No, everyone should pay if everyone is receiving the same benefits and services. In addition, this loss of funding would cause our union to become weaker as we are not able to provide the same level of service and representation for you and your co-workers.

## **Who is behind the Janus case?**

The Janus case is being funded by The National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation and a network of corporate billionaires. It may seem hard to believe that special interests are working to weaken or destroy unions, but these groups are not hiding their work. The National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation is a non-profit with the mission of eliminating union power.

## **We anticipate anti-union groups will try to contact you to ask you to drop your membership.**

Anti-union groups are pumping tens

of millions of dollars into campaigns targeting AFSCME and other union members. We believe they will come to Hawaii if they are not already here. They are telling union members misleading information intended to persuade them to leave the union. We should expect their efforts to be aggressive and to include mailers, telephone calls, emails sent to work addresses and visits to worksites and homes. Don't be fooled.

## **When is the Supreme Court expected to issue a decision on Janus?**

Oral arguments were made on Feb. 26, 2018. The exact date of the Supreme Court's ruling is unknown; however, a ruling will be issued before the court's current term ends in June 2018.

## **How do I explain the value of our union to members and non-members?**

At HGEA, we are dedicated to improving the quality of life for all working people. We work to protect your rights and benefits on the job so you can have a decent salary and a better quality of life. We believe you should be able to attend a parent-teacher conference, take time to give blood, or enjoy vacation time off with family or friends. To help explain the value of our union, feel free to show co-workers a short video that explains how unions help members at [www.hgea.org/whyjoin](http://www.hgea.org/whyjoin).

**TOGETHER WE ARE STRONG.  
#HGEA STRONG**

# Unit 14 Arbitration: Decision Expected This Spring

*In 2016, the Unit 14 negotiating team submitted multiple proposals to the employer for the contract period July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2019. All union proposals were rejected and the employer's initial offer was zero percent raises for the next two years. In 2017, after no progress with the employer, HGEA filed for impasse and moved into mediation with the intent of reaching mutual agreements for some proposals. Ultimately, mediation was unsuccessful and the negotiating team prepared to move forward into interest arbitration.*



*Former Unit 14 president and Water Safety Officer Mel Puu, who recently retired after 30 years of service, testified about the need to amend inadequate contract language and compensation to properly reflect the dangers lifeguards face while on the job. Puu and other "big wave" surfers and lifeguards developed a nationwide rescue program using personal watercraft (jet skis) to quickly cut through threatening surf during rescues.*

The arbitration hearing for Unit 14 (law enforcement officers, and ocean safety and water safety officers) began on January 16, 2018 at the HGEA office in Honolulu. During the six-day hearing, former HGEA Deputy Director Nora Nomura (union panelist), City & County of Honolulu Human Resources Director Carolee Kubo (employer panelist) and Neutral Interest Arbitrator Russell Higa heard testimony from several witnesses supporting HGEA's position. Deputy Sheriffs Michael Oakland, Audrey Kahawai-Kekipi and Myron "Woody" Widrig, and Conservation and Resources Enforcement Officer Kenneth Bode testified on behalf of state law enforcement officers representing deputy sheriffs, conservation and resources enforcement officers, and harbor enforcement officers. Mel Puu (recently retired) and Bryan Phillips represented ocean and water safety officers. AFSCME Associate Director of Research and Collective Bargaining Michael Messina, Certified Public Accountant Tim Reilly, and HGEA Union

Agent Kapono Apao testified on behalf of our union.

State law enforcement officers and ocean and water safety officers described their duties, training and on-the-job experiences being similar to, or even exceeding that of other first responders in Hawaii. Because they're held to the same standards of duty as officers in the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), Lieutenant Oakland testified that state sheriffs complete a minimum of 940 training hours, make arrests, do bookings and see cases through from start to finish. "We're just trying to close the gap between us and our city counterparts," he said. "We do the same work (as HPD). Their jurisdiction is the City & County and we operate on state property."

Widrig, from Kauai, elaborated saying, "sheriffs are considered a law enforcement entity" in their community. He recalled the events of a bomb threat at the Kauai courthouse. "Everybody evacuates that building. We get the



*Bryan Phillips, a North Shore lifeguard on Oahu, described part of the daunting training administered by Mel Puu, author of the Jet Ski Manual for the United States Lifeguarding Association. Hawaii's elite Jet Ski program is the only agency in the state which requires all team members to pass an annual recertification training. "It's good," Phillips said. "We need it to be able to stay sharp with our skills and it holds us accountable for the lives that we have to save."*



*During a cross-examination by the employer, Audrey Kahawai-Kekipi, a deputy sheriff at the Hale Kaulike courthouse in Hilo, described the critical law enforcement services they provide and the challenging environment they work in with limited resources (see page 13).*

judges to a safe place, we get everybody out of that building — security included, bailiffs included," Widrig said. "The only people left behind when we're searching for the next hour to two hours are deputy sheriffs. Everybody else has left that building." Widrig recognizes that without all of his training hours and education, he may not have been equipped to handle this type of threat. "The bailiffs don't respond to incidents like that, nor does security. If there's something happening of criminal nature, they call us," he said.

Like state sheriffs, county lifeguards also undergo rigorous training and certification courses. Phillips, a lifeguard on Oahu's North Shore, attended supplemental classes to become a certified Emergency Medical Technician-Basic (EMTB) and renews his certification every two years on his personal time because he considers it crucial to being a better first responder. "It's tough and it's a lot of work, but it helps me understand how to help people," he said, stressing the importance of having a multi-faceted understanding of emergency response. "When we're out there, we are the true first responders. We're on the beach but we see everything unfolding in front of our eyes. It's not limited to the water. I've pulled people out of cars on Kamehameha Highway and climbed on cliffs to rescue parasailers that have fallen out of the sky." As first responders, he added, these are things lifeguards "just do."

Although the employers acknowledged the essential and skilled work done by HGEA members, they still offered no pay increases despite a surplus of funds and an optimistic economic forecast. As this issue of *The Public Employee* went to print, a decision by the arbitration panel had not yet been rendered. A decision is expected in April 2018.

*"When we're out there, we are the true first responders. We're on the beach but we see everything unfolding in front of our eyes. It's not limited to the water."*

— Bryan Phillips, Oahu, North Shore lifeguard

# HGEA Maui Private Sector Division

*Fighting for Fairness*

With a focus on patient care and safety, HGEA is negotiating a first contract for 852 HGEA members of Maui Health Systems (MHS), an affiliate of Kaiser Permanente. HGEA established a Private Sector Unit to represent these members after the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation was replaced in July 2017 by a private operator, Kaiser Permanente, to take over operations of Maui County's acute care and community hospitals.

With no union contract in place, immediately after the transition, benefits such as vacation and sick leave and other compensation were decreased. Significantly lower compensation and benefits were offered to existing employees by Kaiser Permanente compared to benefits and compensation offered to new hires and to other Kaiser Hawaii Region and all other Kaiser Region workers for the same work.

HGEA is fighting for a fair contract for the healthcare professionals in the



MHS Kaiser system. The people of Maui County and its visitors deserve adequate resources, staffing and workers to provide the best healthcare. Recruiting and retaining highly qualified healthcare professionals to deliver a high level of patient care will not be accomplished if Maui Health Systems is the lowest compensated Kaiser affiliated hospital in the nation. HGEA is advocating for equity to compete with other hospitals to attract the best healthcare professionals Hawaii has to offer and to retain the highly qualified employees who currently take care of the people of Maui and its visitors.

As this issue went to print, HGEA continues to negotiate with Kaiser, and we continue to fight for equity in vacation, sick leave, medical, retirement, step movement, differentials and other cost items. These cost items are not about simply wanting to be paid more; it is about the impact of being the lowest compensated hospital in the nation has on the ability to recruit and retain nurses, other allied healthcare professionals, specialists and physicians to come to Maui to stay — which directly impacts patient care and safety.

For the latest information, visit the Private Sector Unit page on [www.hgea.org](http://www.hgea.org).

## Elected Officers of HGEA's Private Sector Unit

### President:

**Barbara Larrabee-Duarte,**  
registered professional nurse

### Unit 3 Chairperson:

**Aine Ka'eo,** health unit clerk

### Unit 9 Chairperson:

**Gabe Imaoka,**  
registered professional nurse

### Unit 13 Chairperson:

**Drew Meador,** pharmacist

### Delegate to State Board of Directors:

**Matthew Flight,**  
registered professional nurse

# Advocating For You: LEGISLATIVE ACTION GETS RESULTS

**I**t was quietly signed into law without any fanfare in July 2017, but the bill that took six legislative sessions to pass now allows most employees in Hawaii to take family leave to care for a sibling with a serious health condition. It was the perseverance and tireless efforts of HGEA staff and members that brought the proposal to full fruition.

*continued on page 8*

*HGEA members Ricki Aikau (left) and Helen Hamada (right) did not know each other, but both played an important role in the law that now allows most employees in Hawaii to take family leave to care for a sibling with a serious health condition.*



# Advocating For You: Legislative Action Gets Results

continued from page 7

---

## PROPOSAL TO EXPAND FAMILY LEAVE

---

For HGEA members Helen Hamada (Unit 8) and Ricki Aikau (Unit 3), who individually proposed the idea because of their own personal circumstances, the bill was a no-brainer. Previously, the state law stated that besides the birth or adoption of a child, employees were entitled to take family leave to care for their “child, spouse, reciprocal beneficiary or parent with a serious health condition.” Siblings were not included.

When doing her research then, Hamada discovered that even the federal law, the Family and Medical Leave Act, didn’t include siblings. (Although siblings are not explicitly included in the FMLA, the law has since expanded its definition to allow siblings acting in loco parentis, or “in the place of a parent,” to take leave to care for another sibling who is “incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability.”) One of Hamada’s sisters has a medical issue, and caring for her requires much time and cost among Hamada and her sisters. “I heard from members who had the same problem as me. They didn’t have anybody to help take care of their sister or their brother who had health or medical issues, and had to take vacation to care for them,” she shared, in disbelief. “You’re denying a brother or sister to help his or her own blood. It costs a lot to hire someone to assist, so why shouldn’t we include siblings?”

Aikau, a library technician at the Hawaii State Archives, had to take vacation leave to care for her late sister, who lived in Massachusetts. “Every other family member

is covered, why not siblings?” she also wondered. Especially in Hawaii — with our multi-generational families and where ‘ohana means more than just family and with all the responsibilities and obligations of belonging to one. A family caregiver is usually a son or daughter taking care of his or her parent. But as Americans live longer, more siblings are taking on such duties for each other as well.

---

*“I started lobbying with the legislators, saying that something has to be done ... I put it in the context of what if you and your wife are no longer here and your kids have to watch out for each other, how is it that they can take care of each other? I guess persistence pays off.”*

— Helen Hamada

---

“Our concept of family and caring for one another is so much broader in Hawaii than in other places. This means that so many of us are taking care of anyone in our family who needs help,” said State Representative Aaron Johanson, who authored the bill in the 2017 legislative session. “This legislation was an important step forward in making sure our laws better recognize the obligations that we feel to all of our ‘ohana.”

It was through the efforts of HGEA that



Members of the State Political Action Committee (2017)

changes were made to family leave affecting most Hawaii employees. The new state family leave law (Act 128) applies to not just state and county workers but private-sector workers in companies with 50 or more employees. Additionally, the definition of “sibling” includes adopted and hanai brothers and sisters. “I’m really thankful that all workers will benefit from this,” Aikau said. “My grandchildren, great-grandchildren and on will have the benefit of being able to spend their last days together to say a proper aloha when the end has come.”

---

## GETTING INVOLVED IN LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

---

When it comes to changing law and public policy, however, it takes time and a process that involves lobbying, hearings and testimonies. The family leave expansion bill, which was first introduced in the 2012 legislative session, kept being deferred. Johanson acknowledged that employers typically do not embrace the expansion of leave benefits. During one hearing, Hamada remembered becoming angry when a state department director testified that it was going to be too expensive for the state system. “Every session the bill would just sit there,” she said. Aikau shared that one of her friends, a state attorney, told her it was never going to happen because it was too costly.

With the help and encouragement of HGEA staff like Legislative Officer Michele Kurihara-Klein, Hamada, Aikau and other members took legislative action. “I started lobbying

## 2018 Legislative Priorities

### PROTECT THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE, MAINTAIN CIVIL SERVICE, AND ADVANCE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ensure civil service protections under Chapter 76, HRS and expand collective bargaining rights under Chapter 89, HRS especially in light of the Republican anti-worker agenda.

### RESTRUCTURE THE HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND (EUTF)

Allow unions to negotiate benefits and premium contributions like the private sector, which will be cost effective for employees and employers.

### OPPOSE THE PRIVATIZATION OF SERVICES HISTORICALLY PROVIDED BY GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

Services provided by government employees should be protected.

### PROTECT RETIREMENT BENEFITS FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE RETIREES

Promises made to employees upon hire should be kept.

### ENSURE FUNDING FOR VITAL PUBLIC SERVICES

Actively seek ways to generate additional state & county revenues.

## 2017 Legislative Victories

In addition to the family leave expansion bill, following are other legislative measures HGEA supported benefiting workers that became law in 2017:

- **Funding provided for salary increases and Employer-Union Health Benefits Trust Fund (EUTF) benefits for HGEA's bargaining units** (Act 022; Act 023; Act 025; Act 028)
- **Forty-nine exempt Employer-Union Health Benefits Trust Fund (EUTF) employees converted to civil service** (Act 145)
- **Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) included in workers' compensation** (Act 153)
- **Special duty for deputy sheriffs** (Act 075)
- **Public Utilities Commission: Structure and operations updated, management audit required** (Act 198)

For more details on the 2017 Legislative Victories, visit [www.hgea.org/2017legislativehighlights](http://www.hgea.org/2017legislativehighlights).

with the legislators, saying that something has to be done," said Hamada, who works in media design and production at the Center for Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Technology at Kapiolani Community College. "Michele told me it might be good to write letters to the governor so I did. I put it in the context of what if you and your wife are no longer here and your kids have to watch out for each other, how is it that they can take care of each other? Obviously I never got a response back, but when he signed the bill, I thought 'okay, thank you.' I guess persistence pays off."

*"When I actually approached the union for help, they listened, they supported and they did not give up ... HGEA protects the people of Hawaii. It's taking action that gets things done, or changed. I trusted the union with my issue, and they got it done."*

— Ricki Aikau

Hamada, an HGEA member for more than 40 years, steward and former member of HGEA's Political Action Committee, understands the significance of becoming involved in the legislative process. "Lobbying is so very important. You just have to keep trying," she said, having learned much from an AFSCME Legislative Conference she attended in Washington, D.C. "The importance of learning to lobby the legislators is to fight for the rights of members. But in the end, it is for all the citizens of the counties and state of Hawaii. This family leave expansion bill was not an instant success, but persistence and perseverance in submitting testimonies and lobbying some of the legislators finally got it through. We made sure the legislators got the message — it benefits their own families, too!"

"You talk to anybody that would listen," added Aikau, who attended hearings, wrote letters and encouraged others to testify in support of the bill.

Johanson recognizes how critical in-person testimonies are. "HGEA members were instrumental in taking up the fight for

expansion of family leave. They became the personal face of the issue," he said. "All too often, policy issues can lack a personal face at the Legislature. That can slow passage of a good and needed policy change. HGEA members kept up the fight and succeeded last session."

### HGEA NEVER STOPS FIGHTING FOR YOU

Aikau gives much of the credit to HGEA for making the expanded family leave law happen. "I'm quite sure I and other members couldn't do it by ourselves," she

*continued on page 14*



State Representative Aaron Johanson and HGEA Legislative Officer Michele Kurihara-Klein look over this year's legislative priorities.

# HGEA MEMBERS WORKING FOR YOU

*Every day, there is an HGEA member working to provide vital services to the public. These members help to keep our state and counties running smoothly and our communities safe.*



## *Susana "Suzy" Ucol-Camacho*

As an information technology specialist with the state Department of Public Safety, Susana "Suzy" Ucol-Camacho (Unit 13) oversees the corrections management information system, Offendertrak, a statewide database of offenders. The system includes essential information — booking, charges, demographics, classification, visits, transfers, and releases — on approximately 6,000 active inmates from the time they are incarcerated until they are released. She also works closely with Hawaii Criminal Justice Data Center, Appriss (Statewide Automated Victim Notification System), and other outside agencies to maintain their interfaces with Offendertrak. A 31-year veteran with the department (back when it was known as Department of Social Services and Housing), Ucol-Camacho started out as a clerk-stenographer then became a secretary at Halawa Correctional Facility where she assisted and trained employees with using the facility's first computers. When she became an IT specialist, she played a significant role in helping to train employees on how to use the Offendertrak system.



## *Justin Mew*

For 37 years, education has been the primary focus for Justin Mew (Unit 6). Currently the principal of Kaiser High School on Oahu, which consists of approximately 1,100 students from grades 9-12, Mew started out his Hawaii Department of Education career as a science teacher and became a vice principal and educational specialist before serving as principal at Aina Haina Elementary School and Niu Valley Middle School. For his steadfast leadership and commitment to providing innovative learning opportunities for student success, he was awarded the Hawaii Middle School Principal of the Year in 2011 and was a semi-finalist for the Masayuki Tokioka Excellence in School Leadership Award in 2012. Since 2011 Mew has served as a member of the Hawaii Teachers Standards Board, a position appointed by the governor.



## Ruben Inocencio

For more than 25 years, Ruben Inocencio (Unit 2) has been making sure our city roads and sidewalks are clear and safe for the public. Inocencio is a road construction and maintenance supervisor with the City & County of Honolulu's Department of Facility Maintenance – Division of Road Maintenance. He and his road maintenance crew are responsible for all streets and municipal parking lots under the jurisdiction of the City & County of Honolulu, and perform varied work such as maintenance of asphalt and concrete pavement, morning/afternoon contra-flow coning and clearing city roadways and drainage ways of debris generated by heavy rains, wind, tsunamis, earthquakes and other natural disasters. As a longtime steward and very active HGEA member, he is currently on the Oahu Political Action Committee and State Committee on Elections and previously served on the Unit 2 negotiating team and as Unit 2 Oahu Island Division chair.

## Rialyn Menor

Registered Nurse Rialyn Menor (Unit 9) administers a flu shot at the Kauai District Health Office in Lihue. While the flu season typically runs from October to May, Hawaii sees flu year-round, so it's not too late to get vaccinated, especially in wake of the current flu epidemic on the mainland. In addition to giving immunizations to children through the Vaccine For Children's Program, Menor and other registered nurses with the state Department of Health provide public health nursing services through health and wellness promotion, partnership with community agencies for emergency preparedness and response, and communicable disease control, as well as health educational services to a wide variety of groups



within their assigned geographic area. The Kauai District Health Office serves its community with proficiencies in public health emergency preparedness, family health services, public health nursing, services for the developmentally delayed, environmental health services, vital statistics, communicable disease control, and mental health services.



## Amanda Kaahanui

Program Specialist Amanda Kaahanui (Unit 13) from the state Department of Health, Disability and Communication Access Board prepares for the 32nd Annual SPIN Conference that they host every year for families of children with disabilities and helping professionals. The Special Parent Information Network (SPIN) helps provide parents who have a child with a disability with resources and support — ranging from mailing digital/hard-copy resource guides or just talking story — to raise happy, healthy keiki. Kaahanui and her colleagues also maintain a community calendar of events and workshops on their website, along with downloadable content like the Parent's Guide to Special Education. This year's SPIN conference, "SPIN It to Win it," will be held on April 21, 2018 at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Campus Center. For more information about SPIN, visit [www.spinhawaii.org](http://www.spinhawaii.org) or email [spin@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:spin@doh.hawaii.gov).

# Hawaii Island: State Law Enforcement

## *Protecting Big Island's Land and Natural Resources*

Unit 14 member James Ridzon never knows what his day will be like when he goes to work. And he wouldn't want it any other way.

As a conservation and resources enforcement officer with the state Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) on the Big Island, Ridzon could be responding to a hunting call in the mountains or doing shoreline checks in the ocean.

"We're always doing something different," says Ridzon, who is assigned to the North Hawaii district. "One day you can be doing bird hunting checks in the mountain and the next day we're out on the boat, checking boaters or in the humpback whale sanctuary. Another day we can be on a trail hiking somewhere looking for a marijuana patch.



*James Ridzon, at Maunakea, is assigned to the North Hawaii district.*

There's not really a typical day, which is why I like it."

Part of DLNR's Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE), Hawaii's conservation and resources enforcement officers, or game wardens, as they are commonly known, enforce all the rules and regulations under DLNR regarding hunting, fishing, boating, state parks and state lands in Hawaii as well as enforce the administrative rules. They have full police powers, too. Statewide there are more than 100 DOCARE officers and about 20 on the Big Island.

While Ridzon and his fellow conservation officers respond to calls or complaints, patrol areas and provide officer presence, they are proactive in their enforcement of regulations and in their protection of Hawaii's land and natural resources. Like when hikers trespassed into Kohala Forest Reserve and the restricted Kohala watershed to access the "White Road" hiking trail, or when people are harassing turtles or fishing in enclosed areas. "In addition to protecting our natural resources, we're here to keep people safe, promote safety and educate the public and community," adds Ridzon.

In 2017 Ridzon received the first-ever DLNR/DOCARE Officer of the Year award for being "an effective investigator and strong protector of Hawaii's natural and cultural resources." "There are a lot of good officers in the division so it was an honor to be selected Officer of the Year," he says modestly. "I was recommended by my supervisor and my branch chief. It felt nice."



*James Ridzon, conservation and resources enforcement officer.*

It's a recognition well-deserved for someone who is doing a job he always wanted to do. Originally from Connecticut, Ridzon was previously in the Air Force and was finishing up college (he has a degree in biology) before he came to Hawaii nearly 10 years ago. He had always wanted to be a police officer so this job combines that ambition along with his love for the outdoors. Hawaii, particularly the Big Island, appealed to him. "It seemed like a great place to work, the weather, diversity of everything," he says. "It's cool. You can be up in the mountain where there's snow today and then go down to the ocean."

He also enjoys meeting different people while working. "I like talking to the public and visitors, educating them about the island and our natural resources. That's fun for me," says Ridzon. "Plus, I'm working outside in nature."

Ridzon values his job and the people he works with. "I work with a bunch of good guys in my district," he acknowledges. "I have the freedom to kind of do what I want when I go to work. I'm not being told what to do every single day. I like that. I have a good supervisor who lets me get out and do my job, which is nice. And I can always rely on the guys I work with to back me up."

Overall Ridzon says his career as a conservation officer has been ideal. "It's challenging but a unique, rewarding experience too."

## Managing Challenges of Providing State Law Enforcement

Audrey Kahawai-Kekipi (Unit 14) is one of only three female deputy sheriffs, out of approximately 39 deputy sheriffs, on Hawaii Island. A deputy sheriff for nearly seven years, Kahawai-Kekipi works primarily at Hale Kaulike Judiciary in the Hilo district providing law enforcement services under the state Department of Public Safety.

"As law enforcement officers, our job and responsibility is to prevent and respond," says Kahawai-Kekipi. On Hawaii Island, the sheriffs are responsible for law enforcement services for the interior and exterior areas of Hawaii Island judiciary buildings — including providing transports and escorts of inmates and custodies to and from the courts or off island and executing warrants of arrests as well as responding to incidents within the courtrooms, to confrontations and domestic violence situations in the common areas and/or parking lots, and to situations within the vicinity involving persons needing medical assistance due to illnesses or injuries.



From left to right: State Deputy Sheriffs Kawai Gibson, Gerard Moses, Norman Brown, Derek Kalai (now a DLNR conservation and resources enforcement officer), Maui Ramos and Audrey Kahawai-Kekipi.

Kahawai-Kekipi recalls an incident involving death threats made against two Circuit Court judges by a Hawaii County resident. "We provided 24-hour, round-the-clock law enforcement for the judges at the courthouse and their homes, and also for their spouses."

With the recent ruling in *United States v. Sanchez-Gomez*, where pre-trial detainees are no longer restrained (shackled) when they are brought before the judges, Kahawai-Kekipi says she is worried about the safety risks to court staff, public and deputy sheriffs. "The ruling makes our job that much more difficult, particularly in dealing with custodies who are verbally and physically confrontational." She adds, "We also have limited manpower and often don't have enough deputies to provide patrol functions for the courts because foot patrol deputies are often reassigned to the cellblock section to assist with custody and inmate movement and management."

To supplement her income, Kahawai-Kekipi works part-time as a ranger on Maunakea with the Office of Maunakea Management. It is a non-law enforcement position; however, her law enforcement skills came in handy a few months after she became a ranger in 2015. At the time, an upset individual, who demanded to be let through a roadblock restricting access to the summit of Maunakea, struck her sedan into Kahawai-Kekipi's assigned ranger truck and shifted into reverse, placing a deputy sheriff in danger. Kahawai-Kekipi's law enforcement training kicked in, and she assisted in extracting the driver from the vehicle and restraining her.

When deputy sheriffs are compared to security guards, Kahawai-Kekipi explains that security guards "observe, report and provide presence" while sheriffs provide a variety of law enforcement services to the



Audrey Kahawai-Kekipi, state deputy sheriff.

public, which includes ensuring the safety of the public even at the risk of their own safety. That's why she's concerned about deputy sheriffs leaving the department.

"It is difficult to provide the needed law enforcement services for the Judiciary, other agencies and the public when we are losing deputy sheriffs right out of sheriff recruit training and seasoned deputy sheriffs to other law enforcement agencies because the pay is better and the cost of living in Hawaii is astronomical," Kahawai-Kekipi says. She has been a negotiating team member in the first Unit 14 contract and was involved in the Unit 14 arbitration hearing in January (see pages 4-5). During arbitration, she told the panel, "We are seeking retention of our deputy sheriffs, and to further professionalize the division."

Kahawai-Kekipi wants to make sure our state law enforcement officers and ocean and water safety officers are compensated fairly for the work they do in keeping the public safe. "Being a union member and a part of HGEA Bargaining Unit 14 provides me with the opportunity to work toward improving working conditions and wages," she says. "Formulating a union contract is not a quick and easy process as some may think. It requires member input, effort, time and dedication in order to create a working contract that is appropriate and strong. I am truly grateful to all of the AFSCME and HGEA staff for their dedication and tireless efforts in helping us arrive to where we are today."

## Advocating For You: Legislative Action Gets Results

*continued from page 9*

admitted. "Michele was really wonderful and followed up all this time. My strength and passion waned after a while, but their (HGEA's) passion didn't. That's the beauty of the union; that's their job. Without HGEA fighting for us, there would be no law."

Through its comprehensive legislative program, which is planned and developed by the state Political Action Committee comprised of members, Kurihara-Klein and other union staff, HGEA continually fights to protect the rights and benefits of members. More than 5,000 bills were submitted for this 2018 legislative session, and HGEA staff closely monitors and reviews every bill to ensure employee benefits are not being taken away. At the

same time, HGEA also introduced bills in support of worker rights and to enhance current benefits.

According to Kurihara-Klein, pursuing and passing the expansion of family leave in the 2017 session was a strategic win for working families. "We anticipate paid family leave will be a prominent issue in the 2018 session. Since the expansion to include siblings is already in state law, any paid family leave provisions would also by default include the ability to utilize leave for siblings."

It is HGEA's proactive approach and achievements like the family leave expansion law that instill in Aikau, who at

first was resistant to being a member, union pride and confidence that HGEA is always there for her.

"When I actually approached the union for help, they listened, they supported and they did not give up. They have my support after 20 years," Aikau said. "HGEA protects the people of Hawaii. Everyone in the union has a say. If a member has an issue, they need to bring it to the union for resolution. It's human nature for people to grumble and not take any action. But it's taking action that gets things done, or changed. The more strength you have behind you the better your chances of success. I trusted the union with my issue, and they got it done."

## Drug Takeback Program Helps Communities

What are the dangers of keeping old prescription and over-the-counter medications at home? And, what do you do with those bottles of pills and old cough syrup? Those are the questions that Valerie Mariano, branch chief of Community and Crime Prevention, State of Hawaii Department of the Attorney General, answers during community outreach meetings and drug take-back events. Mariano is a 30-year veteran public employee working for the state, and in that time, she's dedicated her career to educating the public on important topics ranging from crime prevention and safety with McGruff the Crime Dog program to substance abuse prevention and anti-bullying initiatives.

To Mariano, public service is more than a job. "I find my career rewarding because I feel like I'm making a difference," says Mariano. "Prevention is everyone's responsibility. From



teachers to law enforcement to unions and family members — we can all do our part to ensure that there are protective factors in place. In that way we all can help to raise responsible young people as our future leaders."

So just what should be done with old medications? Several times each year the state Department of the Attorney General partners with the Drug Enforcement Administration, State Narcotics Enforcement Division, and county law enforcement to provide convenient

drug-take back events statewide where unused, expired or no longer needed medications may be dropped off. Having unused medications at home increases risks of accidental poisoning especially in homes with children, teens or elderly family members. Proper disposal also helps to keep prescription drugs from entering our water supplies and the ocean.

*The next National Prescription Drug Takeback Day is April 28, 2018. For more information on proper medication disposal, go to [dea.gov](http://dea.gov) or [ag.hawaii.gov](http://ag.hawaii.gov).*



# Labor of Love 2018

*Local labor unions spruce up  
Waianae Elementary School*

As part of its annual Labor of Love “give back” project, the Hawaii State AFL-CIO selected Waianae Elementary School as its school to improve and repair. In January 2018 more than 400 union members and their families from 26 local labor unions plus community members spent a Saturday painting buildings, replacing broken and stolen appliances such as fans and air conditioner units, and placing paving stones in the cafeteria courtyard.

“We work with a lot of community organizations and affiliate unions to bring together skilled craftsmen and volunteers to beautify the campus,” said Randy Perreira, Hawaii State AFL-CIO president and HGEA executive director. “What we envision is the opportunity to bring everybody together for one specific purpose on one particular day every year, in an effort to do what we can to help the kids have a better-looking, more efficient campus.”

Thank you to all members and their families for volunteering their time and talents to help refresh and revitalize Waianae Elementary School.



# Annual Events Honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

As they do every year, HGEA members and their families honored and celebrated the life of civil rights and labor leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with various events on January 15, 2018. On Oahu and Maui, participants marched in parades in remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s fight for equality, fairness and justice for all. On Kauai, members joined Kauai Island Labor Alliance for a march and sign-holding event. On the Big Island, members volunteered to pull weeds and clear brush and vines at Pu'uwa'awa'a Ranch in North Kona, and with another service project in Hilo. Mahalo to all who participated!

(1) Oahu, (2) Maui, (3) Kauai, (4) Big Island





*"The Labor Movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress."*

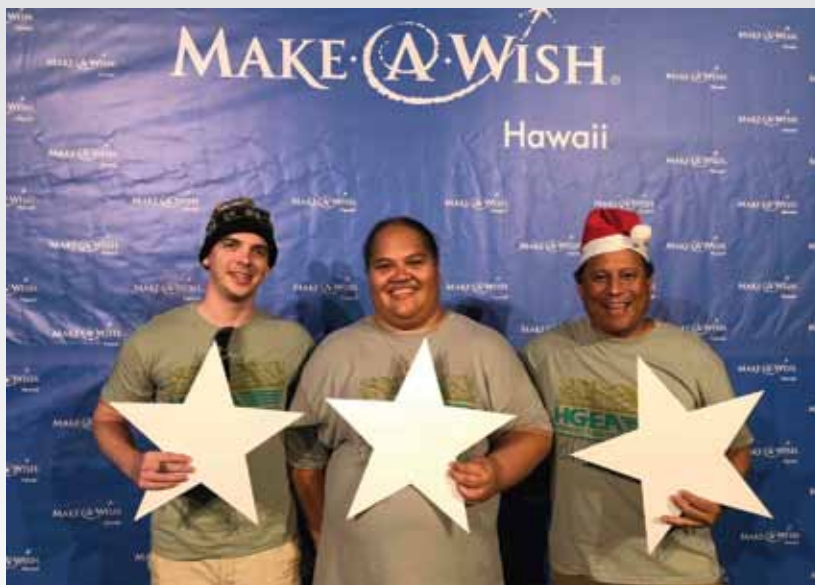
— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Next Wave Update

Next Wave continues to recruit and engage young and new HGEA members statewide through various events and initiatives.

In December 2017, about 20 members volunteered at the Make-a-Wish Foundation's Jingle Rock Run at the State Capitol, assisting with pre-registration packet pickup. It was a first-time event for Next Wave, and they will be adding it to our annual calendar of Next Wave events.

Remaining active on the political front, Next Wave members are planning a Lobby Day in March 2018 and will visit with state legislators on behalf of HGEA's legislative priorities (*see page 9*). They are looking forward to the upcoming political season!



*Members James Logue (Unit 3), Next Wave Statewide Chair Kehaulani "Kehau" Makaila (Unit 3) and Ernest Carvalho (Associate) help out at Make-a-Wish Foundation's Jingle Rock Run in December.*



*Stay tuned for Next Wave happenings, and join us for our next activity or event. Want more information about Next Wave? Email us at [nextwave@hgea.org](mailto:nextwave@hgea.org).*

## 24th Biennial General Assembly to be held in September

The 24th Biennial HGEA General Assembly will be held September 5-8, 2018 at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel.

HGEA's highest policy-making body is the General Assembly, where delegates meet every two years to act on resolutions that guide the union and its officers. Selected delegates to the General Assembly consist of HGEA members from all islands and all bargaining units.

Stay tuned for more information on this year's General Assembly.

## Hawaii Island Members Provide Christmas Cheer Worldwide



*In November 2017, West Hawaii members put together donations at the West Hawaii Civic Center.*

For the second year, HGEA members from East Hawaii and West Hawaii participated in Operation Christmas Child, a project of Samaritan's Purse, a non-denominational evangelical Christian organization providing spiritual and physical aid to hurting people around the world. In total, members generously donated numerous shoeboxes containing, among many other items, stuffed animals, pens, pencils, note pads, socks, soap, hand towels, cups, water bottles, crayons, coloring books, headbands and slippers, to children in need in more than 100 countries worldwide.



**Alohilani Resort Waikiki Beach is a  
Proud Member Benefit Partner of the HGEA.**

**To Book a Room, Visit: [hgea.org](http://hgea.org).**

**#ALOHACHIC**

[ALOHILANIRESORT.COM](http://ALOHILANIRESORT.COM) [f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [@ALOHILANIRESORT](#)

## Upcoming Events

### Oahu

**April through June:** Basketball league  
– To join, contact Wes Aki at 543-0088 or [waki@hgea.org](mailto:waki@hgea.org)

**April through June:** Volleyball league  
– To join, contact Wes Aki at 543-0088 or [waki@hgea.org](mailto:waki@hgea.org)

**April 21:** 29th Annual Food Drive  
– Collect food & fishnet for monetary donations for Hawaii Foodbank

**May (runs 31 consecutive weeks):**  
Bowling – Tuesday night league (Naval Station Bowling Center)

**May (runs 30 consecutive weeks):**  
Bowling – Monday night league (Pali Lanes)

**May 3:** Closing of the 2018 Hawaii State Legislative Session

**May 12:** 26th Annual National Association of Letter Carriers Food Drive for Hawaii Foodbank – Box food items as they are brought into warehouse

**Every first Monday of the month:**  
Retirees Bowling (Fort Shafter Bowling Lanes, 8:30 p.m.)

For questions regarding the above events, please contact the Oahu Division office at (808) 543-0000.

### Maui

**March 13-April 10 (Tuesdays):** Basketball (Wailuku Gym)

**April 1:** Golf (Waiehu Golf Course)

**April 2:** BINGO (David Trask Bldg 207)

**April 7:** Kwong Fook Tong Cemetery Clean-up (8:00 a.m. to noon) Located at Kahekili Highway and Malaihi Road

**May 12:** Golf (Waiehu Golf Course)

**May 29:** Hanafuda (David Trask Bldg 207)

**June 3:** Golf (Waiehu Golf Course)

**July 1:** Golf (Waiehu Golf Course)

For questions regarding the above events, please contact the Maui Division office at (808) 244-5508.

### Kauai

**April 28:** Relay for Life (Hanapepe Soccer Field, 5:30 p.m.)

**May 19:** Retirement Seminar (HGEA Meeting Hall, 8:30 a.m.)

For questions regarding the above events, please contact the Kauai Division office at (808) 245-6751.

### Hawaii

**April 11:** Hawaii Division Volleyball League begins (Waiakea Uka Gym, 6:30 p.m.) – contact Carol Malani at [cmalani@gmail.com](mailto:cmalani@gmail.com)

**May 6:** Tennis (Edith Kanakaole Tennis Stadium, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.)

**May 9:** BINGO Night (HGEA Multi-Purpose Room, 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.)

**May 12:** East Hawaii National Letter Carriers Food Drive – Looking for volunteers to help sort canned goods

**May 12:** West Hawaii Adopt-A-Highway – Meet at the Honaunau Post Office at 7:30 a.m.

**May 12:** West Hawaii Caroling at Life Care Center (2:00 p.m.) HGEA All Units team!

For questions regarding the above events, please contact the Hawaii Division office at (808) 935-6841.

Event dates, times or locations may be subject to change. For updated information on these and other events, visit the HGEA website at [www.hgea.org](http://www.hgea.org), look for details in upcoming eBulletins or check with your island division office.



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION  
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO  
P.O. Box 2930  
Honolulu, HI 96802-2930

NON PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
HONOLULU, HI  
PERMIT NO. 180

## CONNECT WITH HGEA

 **Sign up on HGEA.ORG**  
to get members only access!  
[www.hgea.org/registration](http://www.hgea.org/registration)

 **Subscribe to eBULLETIN**  
our weekly email newsletter!  
[www.hgea.org/ebulletin](http://www.hgea.org/ebulletin)

 **Like us on FACEBOOK!**  
[/hgeahawaii](https://www.facebook.com/hgeahawaii)

 **Follow us on TWITTER!**  
[/hgeahawaii](https://twitter.com/hgeahawaii)

 **Follow us on INSTAGRAM!**  
[/hgeahawaii](https://www.instagram.com/hgeahawaii)

 **Sign up for text alerts!**  
Text HGEA to 237-263



As a member of  
Hawaii's largest union  
with approximately  
42,000 members  
statewide, you are part  
of an organization  
dedicated to  
improving the quality  
of life for all people.

### CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

You deserve a fair return for the work you perform. By standing together, we have more bargaining power to negotiate for pay raises, benefits and safer working conditions.

### PROTECTING BENEFITS & RIGHTS

Many workers choose State or County jobs for the strong benefits package including health insurance, sick leave, paid vacation and retirement benefits. We work hard to protect those benefits from being taken away.

### WORKPLACE REPRESENTATION

No workplace is perfect. Should an issue arise, we'll be there to level the playing field so that you are properly represented and ensure your rights are protected.

### PERKS & PROGRAMS

We are pleased to offer an array of value-added benefits! From educational scholarships to discounts on travel, we believe in creating a positive work-life balance for you and your family.

# We are HGEA™

## How does an HGEA membership help you?

*At the Hawaii Government Employees Association (HGEA), we're here to support fairness in the workplace. By bringing members together as one voice for a common purpose, we are #HGEAStrong*

Watch a short video on how HGEA helps members: [www.hgea.org/whyjoin](http://www.hgea.org/whyjoin)