

Environmental Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i

Food and Farm Sustainability Subcommittee Report

March 26, 2015

We have been following 19 bills for agriculture this session. Four of them are still active.

HB572 Bill to promote good agriculture practices. This is to protect small farms from the expensive FDA regulations. crossed over to Senate refereed to WAM

SB1062. Bill for bio security and quarantine inspection. Refereed to FIN

SB1059 Reduces movement of invasive species between islands. Refereed to FIN

SB1162. Restricts subdivision on Agriculture land of over 100 acres except for Dep of Ag land, agribusiness developer or commercial farmers. Crossed over to. House referred to AGR, WAL, CPC. We oppose this because it limits small farms from having workforce housing.

Noteworthy bills not advancing

HB1514 allowing buffer zones from agriculture chemicals.

HB849. Not Allowing counties to make their own buffer zone regulations.

The legislature appears to have a hands off policy on this one.

I'm very concerned about the Trans Pacific Partnership Treaty. There are many disturbing implications in this treaty. This treaty is being negotiated in secret. Even our Senators haven't seen it yet. Leaked documents have indicated there is real reasons for concern. I want to bring to your attention parts of the leaked documents that will affect the goals of our caucus. If adapted it will inhibit the passing of laws that interfere with the expected profits of a corporation. This includes environmental, public health and food safety laws. If this passes, laws involving GMO labeling, buffer zones to protect sensitive areas from Argo chemicals, global warming prevention initiatives or even water shed protection may be impossible to enact. Local, state and even federal laws will have to comply to these rules. Elected representatives will no longer have the final word on the governing laws. I see this as a huge corporate takeover of our democratic process.

The US Senate will make the decision on this. President Obama wants to put the treaty approval method on what is called "fast track". This means, when the treaty comes up for approval in the Senate the Senate will have no debate about it and in a limited time frame commit to a simple up or down vote with no changes and no discussion. I encourage the Caucus to oppose the fast track path. Senator Schatz has come out in opposition to the fast track but Senator Hirono has reservations but has not come out with a position. I want to point out opposing fast track is not opposing the treaty. Opposing fast track is supporting a public debate about the treaty when it becomes public.

Barbara Borgnino, Chair
ECDPH Food and Farm Sustainability Subcommittee