



DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

December 2007

Aloha mai Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) and Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) stand together in strong support of S. 310/H.R. 505, the Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act of 2007 (NHGRA). This bill affirms self-determination, self-governance and self-sufficiency, and passage enables our agencies to fulfill our missions and increase our community successes.

OHA is a unique quasi-independent state entity established through the Constitution of the State of Hawai'i, with a Board of Trustees elected by the voters of Hawai'i. OHA is responsible for working for the betterment of conditions of all Native Hawaiians through policy decisions, advocacy, community grants, perpetuation of culture and trust oversight. The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act is administered by an appointed Hawaiian Homes Commission through DHHL, charged with managing the Hawaiian Homes Land Trust, assuring Hawaiians access to affordable homes and farms on Hawai'i land into perpetuity.

Benefits for Future Generations. Our agencies are forced to spend too much time and money defending our right to exist. NHGRA protects Native Hawaiian rights, trusts, assets and programs, and thus protects and preserves our culture. Because our visitor industry focuses on traditional Hawaiian culture and places, this benefits all in Hawai'i. It's documented that Native governments in the U.S. are the best to perpetuate traditional native culture through their language and educational programs, protection of religious practices and sacred places, development of culture-based health and social services, and role models for youth.

Increased Economic Well-being. Passage of NHGRA means self-sufficiency for our beneficiaries, who will be able to determine the best use of Native Hawaiian resources, and develop meaningful community initiatives to generate revenue and spur economic growth. DHHL is becoming a self-sustaining economic engine and since 2003, has doubled its income through general lease dispositions. OHA has increased economic self-sufficiency through loans to Hawaiian-owned businesses, funds for job training programs, and millions of dollars in community strengthening Native Hawaiian education, health and cultural perpetuation grants statewide. Passage assures the progress continues and self-sufficiency expands successfully.

Fairness in U.S. Policy. A process of formal U.S. recognition is already available to American Indians and Alaska Natives, and enactment of NHGRA extends a similar process to the third indigenous group, Native Hawaiians. This bill is consistent with our U.S. Constitution, more than 150 Federal measures enacted since 1910, and our Hawai'i State Constitution. OHA and DHHL urge U.S. Senators to vote yes to pass NHGRA for all the people of Hawai'i, and deeply appreciate U.S. House passage in October 2007. Mahalo (thank you).

Sincerely,

The Honorable Haunani Apoliona, Chairperson
Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, State of Hawai'i

The Honorable Micah Kane, Chairman
Hawaiian Homes Commission, State of Hawai'i