

Participation increases value

THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



The general principle that participation increases value sometimes can be overlooked, especially

when schedules are tight and people have to do more with less. However, whether it is uniting for a cause, helping someone in need, changing obsolete systems, etc., there is tremendous value in participating to make a positive difference.

When actively engaged in civic duties, people become more vested, hear new ideas, experience expanding opportunities, create good will, build friendships, and receive a greater, more meaningful return on their investment. As a result, they experience a higher sense of worth. Time and resources also can be saved when like-minded individuals work toward a common goal.

This is true in organizations as well as the political process. Yet, some do not feel that they

need to vote or be involved in the process, but they still expect change. Many do not realize that very few vote, and, as a result, elected officials are chosen by a small number versus a majority of the people.

Historically, Hawaii has had low voter turnouts, so much so that Congress once considered passing laws to install federal overseers to ensure that Hawaii elections are conducted properly.

While the numbers bumped up to 66 percent of registered voters in the last presidential election with a Hawaii candidate, the percent of registered voters this past primary was 42.3 percent. This latter percentage refers to the number of "registered voters," not "eligible voters." Looking at multi-year averages, some 62 percent of those registered vote in the general election. However, that 62 percent makes up only about 38 percent of all "eligible" voters in Hawaii, and elections can be won with just over half of that, or a mere 19 percent of eligible voters. This means that roughly one out of five voters decided the kind of government and laws we have

today. That is not a very high percentage, nowhere close to 50 percent. The bottom line is that we need more people in Hawaii voting, and that is what we hope to effect.

The Maui Chamber of Commerce takes the lead for Maui businesses, providing the voice of business at the Legislature, and advocating for fairness and balance in laws affecting businesses and our working people. We believe that private business employees are Hawaii's largest voting block, or would be if mobilized. Therefore, we are implementing a five-part plan to get like-minded people elected, to help reduce the high cost of doing business, stop anti-business laws and change the unfriendly business atmosphere.

We are:

- Asking Maui businesses to encourage their employees to register to vote by the Oct. 4 deadline for the general election.
- Having the chamber's Political Action Committee (COMPAC), chaired by small-business woman Teena Rasmussen, interview candidates next week to determine their stand on important business is-

ssues and chamber priorities.

- Distributing candidate-endorsement bulletins (once the endorsements are determined), asking every Maui business owner to share this information with employees.

- Inviting other organizations to help spread this word.

- Requesting that business people donate money to the chamber's COMPAC fund and/or directly to the campaigns of business-friendly candidates.

Hawaii is at a pivotal point. If you care about the economy, job creation, the high cost of doing business, education and the environment, then you owe it to yourself, your business and your community to vote. Don't throw this special right away.

You, along with the chamber, other entrepreneurs, owners and employees, can have a positive impact by electing pro-business candidates who will support laws that are fair to business and workers, multiply our value, increase prosperity and turn this economy around.

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