



Aloha friends,

It is hard to believe that we are nearly halfway through 2012, but there is still a lot of work to be done. On July 1, interest rates for Stafford Federal Student Loans are set to double from 3.4% to 6.8% unless an extension of the current rate is agreed upon. While my colleagues and I—from both sides of the aisle—agree that the student loan rate should remain at its current level, there is a disagreement about how to pay the estimated \$6 billion cost. As the deadline fast approaches, we must put political posturing aside to deal with this far-reaching issue, which could have such a devastating effect on so many Americans.

Some facts to help put student loans in context:

- There are 16,681 Stafford student loan borrowers in Hawaii – with 18,441 student loans – that would be affected;
- Student loan debt has surpassed \$1 trillion dollars for the first time;
- Student loan debt has surpassed credit card debt and auto loan debt as the single largest category of debt for Americans;
- The average student graduates with nearly \$25,000 in student loan debt; and
- An increase in the student loan interest rates to 6.8% would, on average, increase the amount owed by each student loan borrower by \$1,000.

When Congress agreed to make education more affordable by adjusting loan interest rates, it was accomplished with broad support by both Democrats and Republicans. This year, however, the Republican majority in the House demands that any agreement to keep the rates at 3.4% must be contingent upon defunding preventive health measures or other parts of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. With both sides agreeing that rates should not be increased, we should be finding new and innovative ways to resolve this issue, not using this issue to attack other legislation.

I firmly believe in federal programs that bring higher education within reach of more students. As

we move to get our economy back on track, create jobs, and increase access to education, it is vital that we take steps now to ease the financial burden on so many Americans. While we must look hard at how we can make programs like the Stafford Loan sustainable and effective, our priority today must be extending the current student loan interest rate. I remain committed to finding ways to reach an agreement to benefit Americans and bolster confidence in our economy.

CONGRESSIONAL WOMEN'S SOFTBALL GAME



On June 20th, I participated in 4th Annual Congressional Women's Softball Game at the Watkins Recreation Center on Capitol Hill. Our bipartisan team made up of female Members of Congress took on the women of the Washington Press Corps. We mounted a late rally – I even drove in a run by drawing a bases-loaded walk, but we fell just short, 13 to 10.

It was great to get together away from political parties and just come together for a great cause. Proceeds from the game benefitted the Young Survival Coalition, which helps young women diagnosed with breast cancer.

For more pictures from the game, click [here](#).

For Hawaii News Now's coverage, click [here](#).

KING KAMEHAMEHA LEI DRAPING CEREMONY

On June 24, Washington D.C. celebrated the birthday of King Kamehameha with a lei draping ceremony in Emancipation Hall in the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center.

This was the 43rd time we have celebrated our king's birthday in the nation's capital and it has become a proud and welcome tradition that allows us to share a part of Hawaii's history and culture.



Kamehameha the Great worked for a decade to unify the islands, demonstrating skill, vision, and leadership to bring about a stronger Hawaii that provided for the advancement of his people. All who care for Hawaii owe him a tremendous debt of gratitude for laying the foundation of the unique and special place that we love.

This year's celebration was also special because it honored Senator Akaka, who is retiring at the end of his term after serving Hawaii with such dedication and grace in the U.S. House and Senate. He has provided leadership and vision in working so hard for federal recognition of Native Hawaiians as a unique political entity. It has not been an easy process, and there is still work to be done. But it has taken one man to provide the vision and leadership that has brought us so far in achieving our goals. The path to greatness is laid by great leaders.

It was an honor to introduce the House bill that authorized the use of Emancipation Hall for this special event.

For more pictures from the ceremony, click [here](#).

Hawaii News Now's coverage, click [here](#).

Mahalo,



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