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Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers

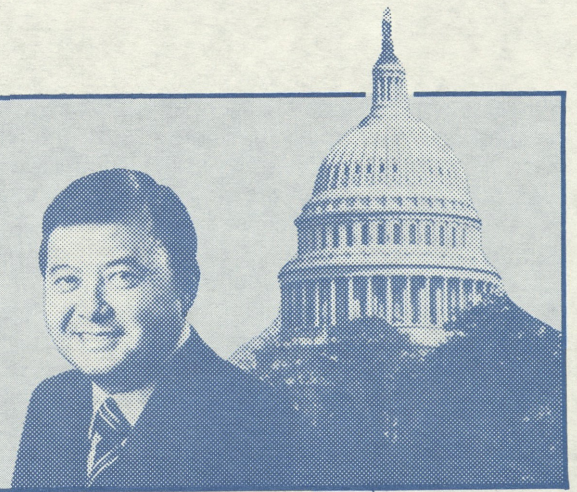
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Report to Hawaii
Daniel K. Inouye
U.S. Senator



March, 1984

One can fairly assess the performance of our elected members of Congress by examining their success in protecting home interests. Is the state always on the short end of the federal budget? Are its needs overlooked by the federal bureaucracy or damaged by federal law?

In this respect, I believe that Hawaii's delegation in Congress possesses a consistently outstanding track record. For many years the federal government has been the economic mainstay of Hawaii as our single largest source of financial support. In 1983, Washington spent \$5.2 billion in Hawaii in the form of paychecks, social payments and construction.

The ultimate source of federal dollars, of course, is the nation's taxpayers -- you and me. In the halls of Congress, every state competes vigorously for its portion of federal funds. Only Congress can ensure that Hawaii continues to benefit from a positive balance of federal spending to federal taxes.

Another measure of Congressional effectiveness is the ability to promote passage of legislation that improves government or assists our citizens. Several news articles have simply totaled the number of bills introduced and passed, for each member. A more meaningful approach would be a comprehensive review of actions by Congress that affect the well-being of our state. It makes little difference which lawmaker's name is attached to legislation, if the result is beneficial to home interests or the welfare of our nation.

Working for Hawaii

In fact, relatively few legislative measures are actually signed into law. Those enacted are usually authored by chairmen of committees with jurisdiction over specific areas. Of the few maritime-related bills enacted into law in recent years, I was responsible for two, as chairman and ranking member of the Merchant Marine Subcommittee. These measures allowed the INDEPENDENCE and CONSTITUTION to operate as **cruise ships** in the Hawaiian Islands.

Seldom are bills introduced and passed in the same year. For several Congresses I have introduced a measure to establish a one-cent postage stamp for constituents to use when writing to their Congressmen. Unfortunately, it has not garnered much support in its referred committee. Yet, because I firmly believe this "**penny stamp**" proposal has merit, I intend to reintroduce it as a way of calling public attention to this idea and promoting its legislative discussion.

In other instances, measures of national or global impact require more than a single year for introduction, committee hearings and floor consideration leading to passage. In 1983 I introduced the Service Industries Development Act, designed to improve our government support for increased export of **service-related industries**, such as financial services, communications, and business management. In the past several months, sufficient interest and support for this proposal have been generated to increase the likelihood of its passage in 1984.

Sometimes the best interests of Hawaii are served by defeating legislation. Hawaii must be especially vigilant against efforts to weaken or dismantle the existing federal program for **sugar**, which maintains a floor price for domestic sugar by regulating the import of foreign-produced sugar. Failure to guard against these efforts could ruin the nation's sugar growers, including ours in Hawaii.

Periodically, unwise Administration proposals threaten Hawaii, such as the planned move of the **U.S. Farmers Home Administration** headquarters out of Hilo. Because most of our State's farmers live on the Big Island, it seems logical to keep this office in that community. But until many protested and the Congress enacted an amendment authored by me to prohibit this transfer, the agency was determined to relocate to Honolulu.

With this background, I would like to review with you some of my legislative achievements of the past 1983 session of Congress, beginning with a list of bills introduced by me that have been enacted into law:

Measures signed into law

- A provision qualifying central Oahu as a separate school district, in the calculation of federal Impact Aid. This improved Hawaii's share of Impact Aid funds to \$15.6 million, an increase of 40 per cent, and helps substantially in the education of Hawaii's students, both residents and nonresidents. (Included in Public Law 98-211)
- A bill to include native Hawaiians as an eligible group for research and assistance under the Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention Treatment and Rehabilitation Act. (Senate Bill 168, signed as Public Law 98-24)
- A measure to improve the reimbursement procedures of CHAMPUS (the medical program for military personnel, retirees and dependents) by standardizing policies with Medicare. (Senate bill 161, signed as P.L. 98-94)
- A bill to authorize studies and demonstration projects to save money in the administration of the CHAMPUS program, while maintaining or improving its quality of health care. (Senate bill 162, signed as P.L. 98-94)
- The granting of retirement pay for certain military reservists who, through government oversight, were classified as ineligible despite having performed active duty before August 1945. (Senate bill 202, signed as P.L. 98-212)
- Establishment of a women's advisory committee to the Veterans Administration, to help improve services to women military veterans. (Included in P.L. 98-160)

(continued)

Amendments that became law

- The prohibition of the relocation from Hilo of the Hawaii State Office of the U.S. Farmers Home Administration. The Administration's planned move of the office to Honolulu would have separated this agency from those it serves -- farmers and rural residents, most of whom live on the Island of Hawaii. (Included in P.L. 98-63)
- An extension of the term of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, to allow it to complete its report to Congress on the incarceration of Americans of Japanese ancestry during World War II. (Included in P.L. 98-63)
- The halting of Administration plans to sell surplus federal property adjoining Honolulu International Airport needed by the State of Hawaii to expand airport facilities. The federal government may now transfer the 3.4-acre parcel only to the state for such airport use. (Included in P.L. 98-151)
- An amendment qualifying the central Oahu school district for Impact Aid. This was later superseded by a separate bill that achieved this purpose. (Included in P.L. 98-139)

In the legislative world, at times the mere introduction of a measure will achieve its goal, even if it is not actually enacted into law. The threat posed by a bill occasionally is the necessary prod that spurs agencies into action.

- A Pacific Basin Task Force was formed by the Department of Health and Human Services to examine the health care needs of native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, after I introduced a bill (S.171), entitled the Native Hawaiians and Native Americans/Pacific Islanders Health Care Needs Act of 1983, that would have required the Department to study this neglected issue.

- The Department of Agriculture released \$7 million to compensate Hawaii dairy farmers for losses incurred by pesticide contamination, after the Senate adopted Senate Resolution 18, which I introduced, to require that these funds be released.

- The General Accounting Office, an investigative arm of Congress, is conducting a study of health care for merchant marine seamen in the aftermath of an Administration decision to close all health clinics, including one in Honolulu, that served this group of retirees. The study commenced after I submitted Senate Concurrent Resolution 4, to legally require this audit.

Private bills

A sometimes misunderstood duty of Congressional members is the sponsorship of private legislation. These are measures intended to either assist persons harmed by the actions of the federal government, or aid those seeking to immigrate or remain temporarily in the United States.

Private individuals sometimes do not have the legal opportunity to recover for injuries which may have been caused by the government. One currently pending private bill I have introduced would allow an individual to sue the U.S. Army for alleged medical malpractice committed while he was an infant, although the statute of limitations for filing such a lawsuit has lapsed.

Hawaii has the largest percentage of alien residents of any state, so many requests are received for assistance on private immigration matters. My longstanding policy is to agree to introduce private immigration bills on behalf of those requesting this help, to enable them to obtain a full hearing before the Immigration and Naturalization Service. It is rare for this agency to reverse its initial decisions, but the real effect of private immigration bills is to provide beneficiaries with the time to exhaust appeals and other legal recourses prior to deportation.

It is my hope that this newsletter provides the citizens of Hawaii with a broader understanding of the work of Congress. Few have the opportunity to visit our nation's Capitol and even fewer can stay long enough for a closer acquaintance with our government.

The government is an institution established to serve all citizens -- young and old, rich and poor alike. You ensure your place in government by actively expressing your views on issues of the day. Do not hesitate to make your voice heard, by letter, by telephone or by talks with your elected members to Congress. We welcome it.

Offices of Senator Inouye

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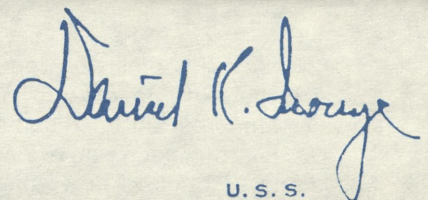
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