

Chronological: Hawaii State Teachers Association, Honolulu

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers
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STATEMENT BY SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
ALA MOANA HOTEL, HONOLULU, HAWAII

AUGUST 17, 1992

I have learned over the years an important and simple truth. The answer to all of our problems, whether in Hawaii or throughout our great land, can be reduced to one word -- Education. It is an equalizing force. It is a means to a better life. It is the critical component to a brighter future.

We place in your hands a monumental responsibility -- to educate our future leaders and our future workforce. This is an awesome task we lay before you, with which I believe must also be laid our gratitude, support and recognition.

I am a proud product of Hawaii's public school system -- Lunaliilo Elementary, Washington Intermediate, McKinley High School and the University of Hawaii. I have fond memories of my public school teachers. They sparked and developed within me, a young boy from McCully, a thirst for knowledge, a love of reading, and an inquisitive nature. My son, Kenny, went to public schools in Maryland. My senior staff -- my Administrative Assistant (Castle High), my Legislative Director (Leilehua High), my Press Secretary (Waipahu High) -- were all educated in Hawaii public schools. In this business, I believe you must put your money where your mouth is. It would be hypocritical to do otherwise.

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Your job is not an easy one today. We are plagued with numerous social problems. Tragically, many students carry with them huge burdens which cannot simply be left at the classroom door. The decline of the traditional family nucleus and the increase in single-parent households -- its resulting instability, and often times, unhappiness in the home -- impact upon a student's ability to learn, and a teacher's ability to teach.

One associated tragedy is the lack of parental involvement in the child's education and learning process. Many single parents, as well as dual income parents, no longer have the luxury of reading or working on math problems together, and thereby reinforce the importance of education. This makes your job even more difficult.

I have been called upon by Hawaii's educators and child care providers to secure federal funds for a demonstration program to "re-involve" parents in partnership with teachers. Hand in hand, parents and teachers must work together. I secured \$500,000 to work to achieve this goal.

If we are to place in your hands the monumental responsibility of educating Hawaii's future, we must also place in your hands the incentives -- good pay, decent benefits, proper recognition, and respect -- to accomplish this great task. It is unrealistic to expect so much for so little.

I still recall my days in the rehabilitation hospital after my injury. Since I could no longer pursue my dream of becoming an orthopedic surgeon, as a part of my rehabilitation, I took a series of aptitude tests. The results showed that I had possibilities in the ministry, in social work, in teaching, and in government service. I wrote to the then Territory of Hawaii's Department of Education to inquire about becoming a teacher. I took one look at the response I received -- low pay, long hours -- and said, "I cannot live on this." As they say, the rest is history. I went to law school, became a politician, and here I am.

You have only my respect and commendation. And, I have been working in Washington, D.C. to truly put my money where my mouth is. I have, and will continue to secure federal dollars and require that innovative programs be initiated in Hawaii. Whether it is special funding to aid immigrant, rural, or Native Hawaiian children, or to secure the maximum possible for Impact Aid, I am honored to do so. This year, Hawaii will receive \$24 million in Impact Aid which will free up state monies for other educational programs.

You need the proper tools, resources, and training to carry your mandate forward. Also, if we are going to continue to attract the best and the brightest -- our next generation of teachers -- to learn from you and carry on, the College of Education must be top-notch. As some of you may know, my wife, Maggie, is a graduate of the University of Hawaii College of Education. What some of you may not know, is that it is still the same building.

I am proud to announce that about two weeks ago, my provision was signed into law authorizing the construction of a new Center of Educational Excellence for the University of Hawaii. Entitled the "Small States Initiative," it provides smaller states, such as Hawaii, with additional funds above and beyond our formula allocation to improve our educational system. What better way than to establish a state-of-the-art facility to teach our teachers and provide them with the best resources.

In conjunction with the State of Hawaii, federal funds will be appropriated to build a new facility, and to develop innovative instructional models and curriculum materials. I envision the Center utilizing state-of-the-art telecommunication technologies to distribute educational resources to rural Hawaii, to provide the resources to keep our present teachers top-notch, and to continue to attract Hawaii's best into the College of Education.

This is my legacy to you, and to Hawaii's future. Obsolete books, maps, and other teaching materials are useless. The crumbling of the Berlin Wall, and the break up of the Soviet Union are prime examples of the ever-changing and turbulent world in which we live. Our students must learn and understand these critical changes as we move toward a more global economy in the 21st century.

You are their window to the world. Pique their curiosity, arouse their passion for knowledge, and develop within them a commitment for excellence. For they must take over, where we leave off.

Dan Inouye

U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII



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