

# Chronological: UH College of Social Sciences Sustainable Hawaii Conference

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**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
2003 ANNUAL PUBLIC POLICY CONFERENCE  
“SUSTAINABLE HAWAII - WHAT WILL IT TAKE”  
APRIL 24, 2003**

# Dan Inouye

U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII



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**On April 19, 1995, 169 people were killed in the Oklahoma bombing. And, we all know too well, the heartbreaking tragedy of September 11, 2001.**

**About a year later, in October of 2002, two snipers killed 10 people, wounded 3 others, and paralyzed the District of Columbia, and counties in Virginia and Maryland for a period of 20 days. Entire school districts were closed. School football games were played in secret locations. People were afraid to eat out or even fill their cars with gas. At about the same time, a school bus bombing in Tel Aviv, killed more than 20 children. School there was not cancelled, and life went on.**

**Very recently, an angry tobacco farmer, drove his tractor into the reflecting pool on our National Mall in Washington, D.C., and brought traffic to a standstill for two straight days. Officials could not determine whether he was a terrorist carrying explosives, and so they shut down everything within a one-mile radius.**

**Terrorism comes in all shapes and forms. One thing, however, is constant. Our lifestyle will have to change forever. The quicker we can accept it and plan for it, the better off we are. The threat of terrorism is a reality.**

**The lifestyle of 50 years ago when the plantations were a big part of community life, children were safe on the streets, and a dollar went a long way, are gone. Life's different now.**

**So the question becomes: Given our new realities, what kind of society do we want to sustain – economically and socially? In answering this question, we must force ourselves to look as far ahead as we can and to focus our thinking that way.**

**For example, 50 years ago, sugar was king, and there were plantations on every island. Back then no one would dare make a prediction that the plantations would be out of business. After all, they controlled many facets of community life.**

**In the 1960's, serious discussions began about developing a diversified agricultural industry – about supporting family farms and small businesses in a variety of crops and products. It was not a brand new concept, but one that has continued to expand, especially as the plantations shut down. Prime lands were converted into diversified agriculture, and more definitely needs to occur. We need to support getting water to the land, and then their products to market.**

**Another example is the Pacific Missile Range on the Island of Kauai. Ten years ago, it was destined for base closure. Today, it is a world-class testing and evaluation facility, with new capabilities added each year. In fact over this past decade, \$968 million has been invested in the facilities, technologies and companies doing business on Kauai. It is the largest employer on the island, after the county government.**

**I plan to continue to make these long-term investments in the building of a high technology infrastructure, linked to defense, and the sciences – ocean sciences, astronomy, and agriculture – which support the diversification of our economy.**

**I am convinced that Hawaii can play in the high technology arena. It is very heartwarming to meet the hundreds of kama'aina coming home to work in this growing sector, making good wages in engineering, computer sciences, modeling and simulation, physics and biology. We must step up this effort.**

**In answering the question about the type of society we want to sustain, it would be wise to involve the community, and to listen to what they are thinking.**

**I learned a very valuable lesson some years ago. H-3. I deferred to well-intentioned state highway planners, and did not listen closely enough to the community. In the end we spent an additional \$80 million for a detour in Halawa Valley to preserve a heiau. It was the right thing to do. At that point, I vowed that I would not repeat my mistake.**

**When the next highway project came about – Saddle Road on the Big Island – I personally set up a community oversight committee to work with the highway planners to arrive at a route that the parties could live with. It took an extra five years, but today we have a route, a final environmental impact statement, and we are ready to go.**

**One of the weaknesses in our State economy is our four physically separate counties. We cannot walk across the street, or drive to another county. Hawaii would be better off if the lines of transport were closer. A greater ease of mobility would aid in a greater sharing of resources and opportunities. A ferry system. One of my first legislative measures upon entering the Congress was to provide authority to develop a ferry system as an extension of our nation's highway system.**

**Plans are underway to again look at establishing a ferry system. About \$20 million in federal funds have been set aside and must be expended. And, while it will not come tomorrow, we must look long-term and make plans. If Oahu cannot decide if they want a ferry system, I know that Maui County would take it in a moment to expand their current operations between their three islands to bring their county closer together.**

**If we are to thrive as a state, we cannot not have isolated communities – Waianae for poor people; Waipahu the plantation community for immigrants; Kalihi for blue collar workers. We must strive to be better connected. Ease of mobility is key to a more integrated society.**

**Sadly enough, Hawaii's roadways present some of the worst traffic in the nation. The attacks of 9/11 demonstrated how poorly the roads in D.C. responded to emergency traffic. There was gridlock everywhere.**

**There is gridlock in Hawaii on a daily basis without a terrorist attack or emergency. Paralysis on the road in the event of a disaster could be the difference between life and death. And, on an everyday basis, thousands of productive man-hours are lost, and frustration levels are high. We have been talking about mass transportation, I am sad to say, for too long. It is time to do something about it.**

**On this note, I hope that initial comments about a possible toll road from the second city to Honolulu have permanently fallen to the wayside, as it would clearly divide the Kapolei community on economic lines – those who can afford to pay ride the "Lexus lane" above, and others who cannot afford it, can continue to suffer.**

**As an integral part of your sustainability discussion, I would urge you to be sensitive to inequities that divide a society. While you cannot put a dollar value on such divisiveness, there is most definitely a price to be paid. In some places, it is called "class warfare"; in other places it is called discrimination, or worse yet, racism.**

**Hawaii is an insular society, surrounded by water. Unlike other areas, it is not possible to get in your car and get away from the "less desirables". We live in a society of diversity. After all, next to Kahala is Kaimuki. Papakolea is at the foot of Makiki Heights. Downtown Honolulu is a stone's throw from Nuuanu.**

**We need to put meaning into the aloha spirit, and it must truly be made a part of our lifestyle. To do so, we must work for it. This includes extending a helping hand whenever possible to those who feel disenfranchised and disheartened.**

**At present, this especially includes the voices of the Muslim community in Hawaii as the loyalty of Arab Americans is called into question. Their profile is being drawn to resemble what our enemy looks like. Dearborn, Michigan, for example.**

**Let us not repeat history. The Japanese American experience.**

**Sustaining an economy takes more than merely generating revenues. It must also include a strengthening of society's social fabric and connection to one another.**

**In closing, let me share with you a little program I created a few years ago called Hawaii 3R's – Restore, Remodel, Renovate our public schools to interject hope into what so many had concluded was a hopeless situation. The \$600 million backlog in repair and maintenance of the public schools.**

**The strategy was quite simple. We would bring in state and federal funds, private funds, donated professional services (engineering, carpentry, electricians, painters), and a lot of sweat equity to help repair the schools. We were never going to tackle the entire backlog, but we needed to give people hope, and an opportunity to pitch in and make a difference. At any given school work day, there are hundreds of people – the military, parents, students, teachers, community leaders, politicians – doing just that. In fact, for every government dollar spent, \$3 in work was completed.**

**The end product was not only an improved school, it was a community brought closer together, and I would like to believe a real life civics lesson for the young students about the importance of responsibility and community service.**

**Boiling it all down, it is about hope.**