

# State Weatherization Assistance Program Conference

Senator Daniel K. Akaka Papers

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REMARKS OF SENATOR DANIEL K. AKAKA  
State Weatherization Assistance Program Conference

Keauhou Beach Hotel  
Tuesday, July 7, 1992

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Before I begin, I want to ask your indulgence while I make some very personal observations and comments. I have served Hawaii in the U.S. Congress for nearly 16 years now, and to say that it has been and continues to be an incredible experience is surely one of the greatest of understatements.

However, where, what and who I am are all a direct result of what you could call Life Before D.C. And I have got to say that this gathering represents one of the most heartwarmingly complete reunions of my life B.D.C. that I have had in over a decade-and-a-half.

I am truly OCSed, OEOed and HCAPed into ecstasy. You are my ohana, and it is a joy to be with you. Aloha!

I applaud those of you in Hawaii's weatherization assistance program for your tireless efforts to convince the Department of Energy to include solar thermal water heaters as an allowable technology within the weatherization program. Solar technology is fully proven and perfectly suited to Hawaii, and it is inconceivable to me why the Department has not adopted it.

Although your efforts have not yet gotten the attention they deserve in some sectors, they are getting high-level attention in Congress. During consideration of the comprehensive energy bill, the Senate adopted an amendment I authored to add solar thermal water heaters to the list of technologies that can be funded under the weatherization program. This amendment is now pending before a Senate/House conference committee, which must take final action on energy legislation before Congress adjourns in October.

One thing that impressed my Senate colleagues most was that solar water heaters are not even a relatively new technology. The effectiveness of solar water heaters was first demonstrated during the 18th century. Before Henry Ford's assembly lines began turning out the Model T, French scientists were experimenting with ways of producing hot water using the sun's energy.

Solar water heaters are not experimental, either. Years of experience has demonstrated that the sun is an energy-efficient and economical means of generating hot water for residential use. Over 30 companies manufacture these devices or their components. This accounts for more than \$65 million in sales annually.

About 25 percent of the energy used in the average home is consumed by the household water heater. This percentage varies from region to region throughout the country and tends to be considerably higher in the sun belt states. In Hawaii, for example, water heaters consume as much as 40 percent of the household energy budget.

Although the initial price of a solar hot water system is somewhat higher than conventional systems, life-cycle costs make solar systems very competitive. Typically, solar water heaters pay for themselves within 6 to 8 years.

So why has the Federal government been so slow to act? One of the most important concerns about any new weatherization technology is the reliability of the energy system; namely, will the proposed technology yield the energy savings promised and will the system have a useful life that allows the technology to pay for itself? These are valid considerations, since, under the weatherization program we are constantly searching for a wise investment of Federal dollars.

In the case of solar water heaters, there should certainly be no fears about the reliability of the technology. A comprehensive certification process for these systems has been established by a consortium of organizations representing solar equipment manufacturers, state governments and utilities. With the assistance of the Department of Energy, the non-profit Solar Ratings and Certification Corporation was established to certify and rate the installation and performance of solar technologies.

Fortunately, solar water heaters are among the systems that have been tested and certified. Thus, the Department has an easily verifiable means of determining the reliability and performance characteristics of equipment produced by various manufacturers. Using this rating system, the Department and low-income households can rely on the certification process to accurately determine which solar water systems are appropriate in the weatherization program.

So, what are the chances that solar water heaters will be incorporated into the weatherization program? Very good, I believe. If the Administration does not act soon, Congress is prepared to do the job for them.

I hope your conference continues to be productive and informative. Looking at your agenda, I noted that a site visit to the Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawaii is planned for Thursday. I hope as many of you as possible will take advantage of this field trip.

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Over the years, the site has been transformed by the dreams and ingenuity of Hawaii's scientific community and the creative thinkers who guide them. And NELH will have new horizons to conquer, thanks to legislation Congresswoman Patsy Mink and I have sponsored to establish a renewable energy and ocean technology lab for the Big Island. To be known as the Spark Matsunaga Renewable Energy and Ocean Technology Laboratory, this facility will serve as a national resource for energy research and ocean technology development.

Scientists at the Matsunaga Center will conduct research on solar, hydrogen, OTEC and other forms of renewable energy. The Center will also be the site for energy-related research in such fields as marine science and global climate change.

Our energy future is clearly changing, and Hawaii and the Spark Matsunaga Renewable Research Center will play a pivotal role in this evolution. With her abundant renewable energy resources, the future offers many opportunities for Hawaii and the Matsunaga Center.

What does the work at NELH have to do with a program like the weatherization assistance program? A lot! I predict that, when the Matsunaga research center becomes operational, its scientific team will be responsible for commercializing new conservation technologies that may find their way into your program. Who knows? A decade from now, some of you younger folks here will be sitting at another of these conferences, listening to the keynote speaker talk about the revolutionary new technology being added to the weatherization program -- a technology born right here in Hawaii!

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Mahalo and Aloha!

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WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
(WAP)  
FACT SHEET

(Office of Community Services)

- WAP began in Hawaii on July 15, 1981 with a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy for approximately \$165,000 to install hot water heater blankets in eligible low-income households.
- The WAP grant was awarded to the Office of Community Services which is administratively attached to the Department of Labor and Industrial Services.
- The implementation phase of the program is contracted out to community actions agencies in each of the four counties of Hawaii (Honolulu Community Action Program; Hawaii County Economic Opportunity Council; Maui Economic Opportunity; and Kauai Economic Opportunity).
- Income guidelines are established by the Federal Office of Management and Budget.
- Hawaii's eligibility is at or below 150 percent of the income guidelines.
- Approximately 13,225 households have been served through WAP in the last ten years.
- In addition to hot water heater blankets, WAP measures now include hot water heater timers, heat pumps, and soon to be added, solar water heaters.
- Presently, WAP's budget is \$203,460 plus \$879,076 of EXXON funds bringing the total amount for FY 1993 to approximately a million dollars.
- A major component to the WAP is the consumer education program which counsels families on how to make more efficient use of their household appliances, such as ovens, refrigerators, lights, etc.
- The targeted number of households to receive services during FY 1993 is over eight hundred (800+).

- Clients include single and multi-family residences with particular attention to elderly and handicapped persons, both homeowners and renters.
- Seventy-five percent of the dwelling units to receive services will be single family units.
- The average cost per dwelling unit is about \$1,300.
- It is estimated that during the FY 1993 program year there will be a savings of 653,400 kilowatt-hours valued at \$78,405 for blankets and timers installed; 1,228,500 kilowatt-hours at \$147,420 for heat pumps; and 270,000 kilowatt-hours at \$32,400 for solar water heater units.
- It is further estimated that the pay-back period based on these figures is about 4 years.
- Community action agencies are required to submit monthly production reports to assure that they are accomplishing their projected goals.
- The WAP Manager, located at the Office of Community Services, is responsible for making on-site visits to each locality and scheduling meetings with island supervisors.
- Production and expenditures are reported to the State, Regional and National U.S. Department of Energy.
- Local suppliers and installers are used to assist the WAP.
- Training and technical assistance, such as this conference, are requirements established by the U.S. Department of Energy and written into the annual work plan by the Office of Community.
- Written documentation is required for every household receiving services, namely, (1) application; (2) verification of income; (3) homeowner/authorization certification and rental form; (4) fuel information release form; and (5) building report.
- The WAP is also supported by a Policy Advisory Council which is primarily responsible for reviewing and commenting on the annual work plan prior to submittal to the U.S. Department of Energy.

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