



DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

News Release

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**BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES WORKING GROUP ADVANCES
PLAN TO SIMPLIFY AND AUTOMATE RECORDING PROCESS**

HONOLULU – A proposal for simplifying the recording process of the Bureau of Conveyances was completed by a working group comprised of representatives from the title companies, banks, lawyers, labor, real estate and Bureau staff.

The group, which was convened by Department of Land and Natural Resources Chair Laura H. Thielen, has been meeting since October to develop a plan for automating the paper filing of documents and improving the operations of the Bureau of Conveyances.

The group's objective is to streamline the recording process, improve customer service, tighten the security of the records database and provide enhanced protection to the identities of the grantors and grantees listed in the records database.

The Lingle-Aiona Administration is asking the 2008 Legislature to consider statutory changes necessary to complete the successful conversion to an on-line system and to streamline the process.

“We look forward to the support of the 2008 Legislature in approving the necessary changes to law to implement these steps to automate and streamline the Bureau of Conveyances,” said Thielen.

“These innovative proposals have come from both the members of the working group whose respective industries utilize the Bureau of Conveyances, and the staff of the Bureau itself,” Thielen added. “I commend the Bureau staff and the working group for developing a plan to improve our efficiency for the public, the customers and the Bureau. This automation will allow the public to have access to the recorded documents in a timely manner.”

One of the legislative proposals improves personal security by allowing the Bureau to use only the last four digits of social security numbers in identifying a party to a document being recorded at the Bureau. This policy is in line with other identity theft protections in place within the State.

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A second legislative proposal allows owners to voluntarily opt out of the Land Court System, which would streamline the process by only recording in the regular system. The Land Court requires lengthy review and verification of documents prior to filing because the State of Hawai'i guarantees title to the property. Regular system filing does not require the depth of verification, since the title is not guaranteed by the State.

An additional proposal allows the Bureau to accept and maintain digital copies of documents rather than paper or microfilmed documents. The current laws require that documents be filed in paper copy and that the Bureau store them in paper or microfilm copy format. This step will save time, money and space for the future filings.

“This proposal is critical to the future of the automated filing system for the Bureau,” said Thielen. “It is important to note that the documents must be received in a format that cannot be changed once it is received by the Bureau. The only addition the Bureau will make is to electronically add a recording stamp to the document. The integrity of the original document will remain intact.”

Preliminary plans under the proposal include allowing the Bureau's customers to input the necessary data into an on-line database and transmit the executed deeds, mortgages and other documents electronically directly to the Bureau of Conveyances. The staff will verify the information and record the documents without ever printing a paper copy of the filed documents. All documents will be archived in an on-line database accessible through the State of Hawai'i website, hawaii.gov.

One goal of this process is to simplify the filing to be as easy as making a purchase through an on-line vendor, such as amazon.com. Through the simplification, the Bureau will also provide faster recordings, thus improving its customer service. The database will allow individuals to access all filed documents on-line and request certified copies directly from the website.

“A key component to the success of this conversion lies with the willing participation of the existing staff at the Bureau of Conveyances,” Thielen added. “The staff has provided input throughout the process and will continue to be directly involved through the conversion.”

“The staff looks forward to increasing the Bureau's efficiency through the technological enhancements to the recording process. They recognize that an automated system will not take away jobs at the Bureau, but rather will improve their work environment with a safe, fast, user-friendly system,” she said.

The Department is working with the contractor to begin development of the software for the on-line system. Thielen anticipates the software development, testing and staff training will likely take six months.

“Our goal is to begin on-line filings by mid-year, provided the Legislature makes the necessary changes to the law and supports our request to upgrade our computer systems,” Thielen said.

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