

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

HONOLULU

April 18, 2007

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIONS TO SENATE BILL NO. 14

Honorable Members  
Twenty-Fourth Legislature  
State of Hawaii

Pursuant to Section 16 of Article III of the Constitution of the State of Hawaii, I am returning herewith, without my approval, Senate Bill No. 14, entitled "A Bill for an Act Relating to the University of Hawaii."

This bill attempts to implement the provisions of Article X, Section 6 of the State Constitution, approved in 2006. It establishes a seven-member Candidate Advisory Council, exempts this Council from the open meeting provisions of Chapter 92, Hawaii Revised Statutes, increases from twelve to fifteen the number of University of Hawaii Regents, and establishes geographic criteria for 12 of the Regent positions.

This bill is objectionable because it contradicts what public citizen trusteeship should be--that is, citizens who are independent in their individual and collective judgment and who serve the people of Hawaii, not special interest groups. Instead, Senate Bill No. 14 establishes a narrowly focused constituency-based selection council with each member appointed by seven separate interests, including the All Campus Council of Faculty Senate Chairs, the Executive Council of the University of Hawaii Student Caucus, the Association of Regents Emeritus, and the President of the Alumni Association.

These individuals can recommend as few as only two names to fill a vacancy on the Board of Regents, further contributing to the partisan and narrow focus of potential Regent candidates.

Three nationally recognized and well-respected organizations have expressed serious concerns about the selection

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process proposed in Senate Bill No. 14--the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), and the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). They have, on several occasions, pointed out that the process contained in this bill runs counter to national best practices in university governance.

I do not believe any governor, regardless of party, would agree to a process that is opposed by the President of the University of Hawaii and those very organizations that judge whether to accredit the State's premier institution of higher learning.

I am also troubled by the exemption of the selection council from Part 1, Chapter 92, of the Hawaii Revised Statutes covering open meetings, also known as the Sunshine Law. This blanket exemption would allow this council to conduct its proceedings behind closed doors away from public scrutiny. This increases the possibility of political or partisan overtones in the selection process being hidden from public view. Further, it makes it difficult for the selection council members to be held accountable for the recommendations they make since the public will be unable to observe how certain persons were selected, what qualifications were applied, and what screening process was used.

I affirmatively state that I respect the decision of the electorate in amending the State Constitution to change the method for selecting the Board of Regents. I have demonstrated my commitment to implement this Constitutional change by recommending legislation (House Bill No. 1431/Senate Bill No. 1517) to establish an advisory council to screen and propose candidates for appointment to the Board of Regents. This Administration bill does not create the kind of narrow, constituent approach that

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Senate Bill No. 14 creates and respects the importance of an open selection process.

Should the Legislature send me a bill that incorporates the unbiased and open approach embodied in House Bill No. 1431/Senate Bill No. 1517, then I would be able to sign that measure without hesitation.

For the foregoing reasons, I am returning Senate Bill No. 14 in its present form without my approval.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Lingle", written in a cursive style.

LINDA LINGLE

Governor of Hawaii