



CITY COUNCIL

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COUNCILMEMBER DJOU: NOW ISN'T THE TIME FOR A TAXPAYER-FINANCED JUNKET TO 'VEGAS

Yesterday, Honolulu City Councilmember Charles K. Djou (Waikiki, East Honolulu) strenuously objected to the 20% increase in appropriations for the Office of Economic Development ("OED") to finance a 'tourism promotion' trip for Mayor Mufi Hannemann to travel across the U.S., including a visit to Las Vegas for the UH v. UNLV football game.

"After yesterday's budget committee deliberations, in percentage terms, the Office of Economic Development received the single largest increase of any existing City agency. Increasing government spending in these tight economic times is questionable. Even more questionable, however, is the purpose of this spending increase – to have taxpayers underwrite a trip allowing for the mayor to gallivant across the country, including a stop in Las Vegas for the UH v. UNLV football game, on a tourism promotion junket, on the taxpayers' dime," stated Councilmember Djou. "As the City looks at increasing the property tax and the vehicle tax and the gasoline tax and bus fares and parking fees for the average resident, it doesn't make sense to increase government spending for a junket. If the mayor really wants to go to the UH v. UNLV game, he should have it come out of his existing budget, not a spending increase."

The budget committee approved adding \$100,000 to the OED budget, a 20% increase, to underwrite tourism promotion travel for the mayor. The mayor will join the three other county mayors on this junket. Virtually every City agency, other than OED, saw their budget remain flat or received a slight cut in spending.

The budget committee originally gave OED the same budget for next year as its current budget. This new \$100,000 appropriation, however, was re-inserted into the budget at 11:00 p.m. last night, after the evening news, and after most reporters and the public had gone home. This junket expenditure was also the only budget item that the City Managing Director, Kirk Caldwell, personally testified for, signaling its importance to the mayoral administration.

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