



CITY COUNCIL

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COUNCILMEMBER DJOU: CITY NEEDS TO LOOK AT BOARD OF WATER SUPPLY POLITICS

On August 12, the City Council Executive Matters and Legal Affairs committee advanced Reso. 09-243. This resolution, introduced by Councilmember Charles K. Djou (Waikiki, East Honolulu), calls for an audit of the Honolulu Board of Water Supply's political lobbying costs and practices.

“The Honolulu Board of Water Supply has dramatically increased water rates for Oahu residents over the past few years. It has also ramped up its lobbying of public officials. It strikes me as odd that the Board of Water Supply, a quasi-public agency, needs to use so much public funds to lobby public officials,” stated Councilmember Djou. “I am troubled that the Board of Water Supply prefers to be unaccountable and hide from public scrutiny of its spending practices. The water board needs a thorough audit and more careful scrutiny.”

The Honolulu Board of Water Supply's budget and spending practices are not subject to any approval by the Honolulu City Council.

Earlier this year, the water board asked for approval for a new bond float from the Honolulu City Council. Although the City Council approved this bond request, several councilmembers asked challenging questions to the Board of Water Supply and requested answers on the board's spending practices. The board reacted to the City Council's request for information and transparency by sending its lobbyists to the legislature to enact SB 1206. SB 1206 eliminated the City Council's authority to approve board revenue bonds – allowing the board to freely incur debt with no oversight from any elected body whatsoever. SB 1206, introduced by Maui State Senator Shane Tsutsui, only applies to Oahu - the neighbor island water boards are not affected by this measure. Governor Linda Lingle vetoed SB 1206, but this measure was over-ridden by the Legislature last month and has become law.

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