



CITY COUNCIL

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COUNCILMEMBER DJOU CONTINUING TO PUSH FOR ETHICS REFORM

Continuing his fight to strengthen ethics rules at City Hall, Honolulu Councilmember Charles K. Djou (Waikiki, East Honolulu) introduced two new ethics reform measures. The first Djou proposal gives the City Ethics Commission the same powers to issue civil fines for City ethics code violations by City employees as the State Ethics Commission has against State employees for State ethics code violations. The second Djou measure bars newly hired City officials from making decisions regarding their immediate previous employer for one year.

“I am continuing my long and hard push to strengthen Honolulu’s ethics rules. While I am happy that some progress has been made toward strengthening Honolulu’s ethics provisions, much more can and should be done. I have introduced legislation to finally give the City Ethics Commission the same powers that already exist at the Federal and State level for their respective ethics agencies to issue civil fines against all government workers who violate the ethics code,” stated Councilmember Djou. “I am also working to strengthen the City’s conflict of interest rules by preventing newly hired City officials from potentially reviewing their own work submitted while in private employment.”

- In 2003, in his first year at Honolulu Hale, Councilmember Djou introduced a bill to give the City Ethics Commission the power to issue civil fines. Djou introduced his measure after two councilmembers were sent to prison for ethical violations and another two councilmembers were sanctioned by courts for legal violations. An additional eight inspectors in the City’s liquor commission were also indicted and later convicted of Federal bribery and corruption charges. Djou’s bill was killed when the Corporation Counsel opined that a charter amendment was necessary to enact Djou’s proposal.
- In 2004, Djou withdrew his ethics reform bill and reintroduced it as a charter amendment. Djou’s measure was vigorously opposed by the public employee unions and Djou’s charter amendment proposal was killed by the City Council on a 5 to 4 vote.
- In 2005, Djou again pushed to give the City Ethics Commission the power to issue fines by submitting his proposed charter amendment to the City Charter Commission.

- In 2006, the Charter Commission passed a weakened form of Djou’s measure and sent it to the ballot box. The Charter Commission opted to give the City Ethics Commission powers to issue fines for ethics violations, but only against City elected officials, completely exempting all mayoral appointees and employees of City government. At the November 2006 general election, Oahu voters overwhelmingly passed the watered down version of Djou’s ethics plan.
- In October 2007, nearly a year after voters authorized the City Council to grant the City Ethics Commission the power to issue fines for ethics code violations, the Honolulu City Council finally gave the City Ethics Commission such authority, but only against the 11 elected officials in Honolulu government. Neither the HGEA or UPW testified against this ethics bill and the measure passed the City Council unanimously.
- Councilmember Djou has now again introduced legislation to give the City Ethics Commission the power to issue fines for ethics code violations.

Currently, City officials are barred from lobbying the city for one year after leaving City government. The reverse, however, is legal. Currently, a new employee in City government can immediately make decisions on the matters he or she may have just submitted while previously in private employment. Djou’s second reform proposal aims to fix this loophole by placing the same conflict of interest ban on City officials entering City government as those leaving the government.

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