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NISHIMOTO'S PRIORITIES

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12



18



PHOTOS BY ANTHONY CONSILIO

DEPARTMENTS

Chair’s Message 6

NGA Update 8

Legislative Update 10

New Members 20

Member News 20

The Last Word 22

FEATURES

Representative Scott Nishimoto shares his 2024 legislative priorities 11

The Hawaiian Airlines HFIA 2024 Annual Social 12

AI In the Food Industry 14

HFIA Legislative Talk Story Panel 18

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Candice Marrs and her daughter
visit the sustainable crops at
Kualoa Ranch, O'ahu.

Featured Sustainable Crops:



Chinese Cabbage

In 2021, Hawai'i farmers produced 2.9 million pounds of this cool-season crop, which does especially well at elevations higher than 1,500 feet such as Kula, Kamuela and Volcano.



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CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Aloha Hawaii Food Readers,

2024 has been off to a great start for the Hawai'i Food Industry Association (HFIA). We kicked off the year with a number of productive, fun, and informative events. Our first Membership Meeting of the Year and Legislative Talk Story Panel was in January (see more on page 20), followed in February by an out of this world Social (page 12) and our AI in Food Retail Online Panel (page 16.)

The State Legislative Session is now in full swing, Lauren covers more in her Legislative Update on page 10, and for up to date info HFIA members can check the Legislative Update in their Member Plus App. We're also gearing up for our Spring Golf Tournament this April, our new Hawai'i Food Industry Job Fair, and the Annual HFIA Convention June 7 - 9, which will be

here before you know it!

Being a part of the food industry is so rewarding because food is such a positive part of our customers' lives, and our businesses add so much to our communities. With everything that HFIA has going on this spring, I feel the same way about being a part of this great association. HFIA makes so many positive contributions to our businesses and our industry. HFIA provides advocacy and resources, we host events that create community and opportunities for connection in our industry, and sponsor programs to support workforce development and education. All these great things are possible because of the hard work of our HFIA staff and active participation of our dedicated members. It's been such a pleasure working and connecting with you all this spring in different ways and I'm excited for everything we've got coming the rest of the year!



Mahalo!

Gary Okimoto
HFIA Chairman
COS, Safeway



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OUTLOOK HERALDS A BUSY YEAR FOR POLICY IMPACTING INDEPENDENT GROCERS

**BY GREG FERRARA,
PRESIDENT AND CEO, NATIONAL GROCERS ASSOCIATION**

With an election on the horizon in which the White House and control of Congress are on the line, 2024 is shaping up to be an interesting year.

Pending legislation and regulatory changes in the coming year are sure to influence business operations, supply chain management and consumer expectations.

The past year has been a busy one for NGA in support of independent grocers. Breaking it down by the numbers reveals a flurry of activity that has helped make significant inroads toward our policy goals: nearly 200 meetings between independent grocers and policymakers during last spring's Fly-In for Fair Competition in Washington, D.C.; 35 advocacy meetings convened during last fall's Executive Conference and Public Policy Summit; at least 20 action alerts sent this past year, calling members to action on matters of policy; 22 store tours that hosted elected officials to illustrate the impact of policy on their local communities; and more than 2,000 grassroots messages sent to Capitol Hill, including personal outreach from NGA members to their members of Congress during a push to support the Credit Card Competition Act, a bipartisan effort that would bring crippling swipe fees under control.

Additionally, NGA launched Grocery Guard, a "grasstops" initiative creating a nationwide network of owners and industry leaders who have volunteered to contact a member of Congress when independent grocers need to relay the importance of a particular issue impacting the industry. And efforts by NGA and our members helped to secure an extension of the EBT processing fee prohibition in the Farm Bill extension.

These wins are adding momentum to independent grocers' policy priorities for 2024.

Antitrust reform remains at the top of the list. NGA seeks revived enforcement of the Robinson-Patman Act (RPA), which levels the playing field for smaller retailers by prohibiting dominant retail buyers from using their muscle to secure more favorable terms on goods than competitors.

Progress has included congressional pressure on the FTC to enforce RPA; enactment of federal law allowing state attorneys general

to more strictly enforce antitrust laws; advancement of NGA-drafted legislation that would give the Small Business Administration power to address anticompetitive conduct; and enhanced public awareness through the media. There's still plenty more to do, including more congressional hearings and introduction of RPA reform legislation.

Support for credit card reform is growing due to our grassroots strength, our cultivated champions in Congress, and the powerful message of independent grocers who serve at the heart of their communities. Requiring the 30 largest issuers of credit cards to enable dual routing would create more competition for an expense that is particularly burdensome for smaller retailers.

The current Farm Bill expired on Sept. 30, 2023, and the recent one-year extension came as Congress works toward a new five-year plan. NGA will continue its work to advance a comprehensive bill that includes a permanent ban on EBT processing fees, maintaining SNAP Choice to allow participants to choose the right foods for their family; stopping the SNAP Nutrition Security Act to protect consumer and retailer data from burdensome reporting that could lead to SNAP restrictions; and expanding nutrition incentives by streamlining access to produce.

SNAP is important to Hawai'i; it's responsible for more than 1,200 jobs across grocery and supporting industries in the Aloha State, nearly \$50 million in wages, and \$10 million in state and local tax revenues.

Meanwhile, numerous regulatory developments in play revolve around labor and workforce, including the OSHA walkaround rule, overtime rule changes, a return to the "ambush" election rule, and the NLRB Joint-Employer Standard. To limit their impact on independent grocers, NGA has filed comments with the relevant agencies and participated in public hearings, lobbied Congress to roll back potentially harmful rules, and joined alliances with other organizations such as the Coalition for a Democratic Workplace.

"SNAP is important to Hawai'i; it's responsible for more than 1,200 jobs across grocery and supporting industries in the Aloha State, nearly \$50 million in wages, and \$10 million in state and local tax revenues."

Additional regulatory activity is aimed at other aspects of business operations, such as the refrigeration HFC phasedown. The AIM Act, signed in twilight of the Trump presidency, implements an international treaty that phases out HFCs due to their ozone-depleting properties that will require supermarkets to re-equip their refrigeration systems, estimated to cost around \$1.5 million per store. NGA has allied with FMI, NRF and RILA to advocate for minimizing the impact on retailers. Additionally, a new FDA traceability rule under the Food Safety and Modernization Act (FSMA) requires grocers and wholesalers to maintain a traceability plan that requires grocers to provide traceability information with 24 hours' notice. NGA has filed comments with the FDA and is trying to obtain an extension of the Jan. 1, 2026, compliance deadline, and has entered into solution partnerships.

It's truly a historic time for independent grocer advocacy. In what is essentially a three-front battle for the future of the industry, there's real opportunity to level the playing field for the first time since RPA's passage in 1936; a good chance to lower swipe fees and bringing competition to the credit card marketplace; and the opportunity to strengthen federal nutrition programs that bolster independent grocers' efforts to feed communities across the country. ❖



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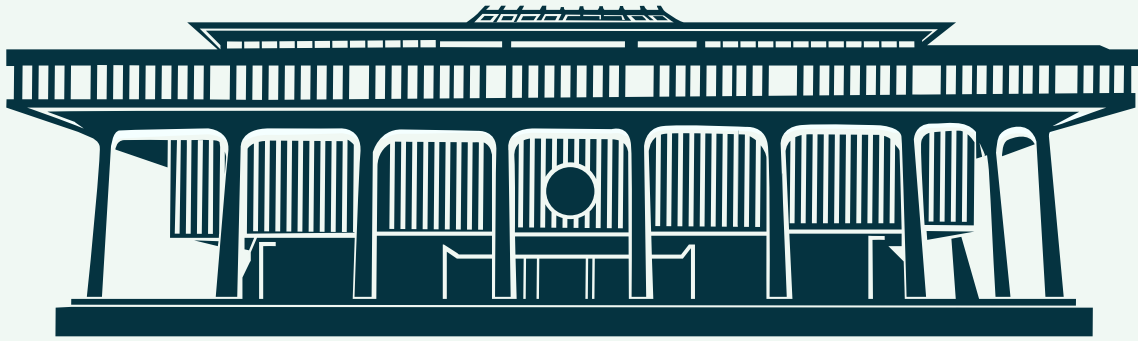


ILLUSTRATION BY DUSTIN KODA

HFIA TESTIFIES ON FOOD, WATER, AND OTHER SUPPLIES REPORT

The 2024 Legislative Session is in full swing, featuring a flurry of bills addressing HFIA's priority issues. Here's a snapshot of our involvement and key areas of focus:

FOOD AFFORDABILITY, SECURITY, SNAP, AND DA BUX

Our commitment to supporting the Double Up Food Bucks program (DA BUX) remains a top priority. This program, doubling purchasing power for SNAP users buying local fresh food, is under threat due to the absence of a reliable state funding source. Additionally, we're backing the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) program, offering food assistance to families during the summer break, especially those with food-insecure school-age children.

We strongly believe in bolstering local food production and

manufacturing to enhance affordability and food security. This involves backing various bills, from increasing local meat processing capacity to supporting Hawaii Technology Development Corp. (HTDC) grant programs, Foodbank funding, tax credits for shipping local produce, and promoting local agriculture and aquaculture.

On another note, HFIA appreciates the opportunity to respond comprehensively to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Request for Information (RFI) on Food Price Data for the State of Hawai'i. Recognizing the disparities in food prices between rural regions and urban Honolulu, we advocate for data incorporation from Neighbor Islands to ensure a holistic understanding of the state's cost of living. We encourage all our members to participate in the RFI, as it can prevent a significant decrease in SNAP payments to Hawai'i residents.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Addressing workforce challenges, HFIA is advocating for measures supporting affordable childcare, a critical factor in workforce participation. We are supporting grants to employers offering childcare or caregiving support. Other areas of focus include backing the qualified internship grant program, enhancing state-level workforce development, creating incentives for hiring returning Hawai'i residents, and addressing the shortage of commercial drivers with a CDL through the creation of a working group in the Department of Transportation.

SUSTAINABILITY

Building on last year's efforts, HFIA continues to support bills aimed at enhancing sustainability in our food systems and state. This includes facilitating energy generation and storage at food industry businesses, making them more resilient. Our backing extends to measures promoting the utilization of solar energy and storage on-site, as well as supporting local food producers in their journey towards sustainability.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE

Collaborating with partners, HFIA is actively involved in improving the state's emergency preparedness, response, and resiliency. In the legislature, we support measures creating funding for emergency warehousing for the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) and establishing resiliency hubs across different parts of the state. HFIA is committed to backing bills that secure funding for critical emergency management efforts and enhance clarity in the state's emergency management planning.

Stay tuned for detailed insights on HFIA's initiatives inside and outside the legislature, as we work towards a more resilient and sustainable future for Hawai'i. 🌱


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REPRESENTATIVE SCOTT NISHIMOTO SHARES HIS 2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

'DA BUX' bill rises to the top because it supports local families, farmers, and the economy.

BY CAROLINE JULIAN-FREITAS

As the 2024 legislative session was getting underway, we sat down with Rep. Scott Nishimoto to discuss his thoughts on priorities this legislative session. Born in Honolulu, Rep. Nishimoto attended Manoa Elementary School and Saint Louis School and graduated from Mid-Pacific Institute. Today, he proudly represents State House District 23, which includes Ala Moana, Kaheka, McCully, Mo'ili'ili and Kapahulu.

Caroline Julian-Freitas: Tell us about your education and background.

Representative Nishimoto: I attended the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, majored in sociology and minored in American Studies. While at UH, I served as student body president in 1996. After graduating college, I had the privilege of working as a staff member in the Washington, D.C. office for the late U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye. Thereafter, I returned home to attend law school at William S. Richardson School of Law, where I earned a Juris Doctor in 2002.

Why did you decide to become a lawmaker? My experience in Senator Inouye's office really shaped my desire to go into public service.

Being able to work with him on a daily basis and see all that he was able to do was inspiring, and it led to me wanting to do the same. I decided to run for office, and I was elected to my first term in 2002.

You've been a legislator for many years. Which accomplishments would you like to highlight from over the course of your career?

It's been 22 years and there's been a lot of accomplishments. I've always worked to get infrastructure to my community because it's an older community, so we have a lot of needs. Capital improvement projects (CIP) is where I've really focused. As a member of the House Finance Committee, I've had the opportunity to work on the State Budget Bill, including CIP requests.

Additionally, the most rewarding part of serving my community has been working on the little things. That's what matters. My office and I are very focused on community outreach. When people call, we follow up on their concerns. And no matter how big or how small it is, we always follow up and try to address their concerns. The tendency is to think of all the big bills that we pass or that kind of thing, but to me it's the person-to-person things that

we do. That is what gives me the biggest joy. **What are the biggest changes you've seen or been part of in your job?**

The advances made in technology over the years have changed the way we do things. When I first got elected, smartphones as we have them today, didn't exist. So, most people had pagers and cell phones. Having a computer in your pocket has changed the way we do things considerably. Our constituents are able to communicate with us much easier and they expect communication to be quicker. The other big change has been the arrival of social media. It's a way for us to communicate with our constituents. It's also for them to communicate with us.

The new legislative session just got underway. What are you most excited about this year?

I don't know if excited is the word to describe what's ahead, but a major focus will be on how the legislature prioritizes the needs of the State with the budget that we have. We're going to have a lot of bills relating to Maui to help the island recover. A bill I introduced, HB1525, relates to one of my top legislative priorities, which is "DA BUX" Double Up Food Bucks. It helps the people of Maui and the rest of the State. I want to make sure there's funding for it so folks on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) have access to more affordable local produce by doubling their purchasing power.

Why do you think it's important to support DA BUX Double Up Food Bucks?

In the Governor's (2024) State of the State's address, he mentioned that 44% of our families live paycheck to paycheck. Poverty is a huge issue in our state. A program like DA BUX supports families that need the help. It doubles the SNAP money that they can use to purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables. Not only does it expand their buying power, it helps our farmers and it keeps money in the local economy. It's a triple win. We always talk about our state being more food sustainable. This program helps our farmers. We also want our citizens to eat healthier, so DA BUX helps. It encourages them to eat healthier. We always say, "Buy Local," and that's what this encourages, too.

Is there anything else we can do to help programs in the state?

Advocacy is always important in our process. So, getting people to come out and tell us what they think and what they feel is important, especially this year because there's more needs to fulfill than the money we have. Prioritizing is going to have to take place and it's going to come down to, a lot of times, what we hear from the public. For a program like DA BUX — to hear from farmers, to hear from people on SNAP — that's going to be really important. ❖



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Of course the force behind all our successful HFIA events is our amazing Social Committee. Huge Mahalo to you all, this could not happen without you!







AI IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

BY ALEXIS CHAPMAN

While Artificial Intelligence (AI) in certain forms has, arguably, been around for years, 2023 was the year that the full scope of possibilities for this technology started to become clear. AI is actually a blanket term for a large group of technological advancements that differ from other technology in not only the quantity of data they can work with but also in their ability to reason, actively engage, sense, and think. Every day AI is being used in new and creative ways across a wide range of industries. As AI developments move forward and it becomes more entrenched in how business is done, keeping up with this technology and using it to its full advantage is going to be a key to maintaining competitiveness. In the food industry there are already a number of different ways that AI is being applied now, and it will likely find many more applications in the near future.

PRECISION AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is of course at the root of the food industry, and it is in many instances the most resource intensive portion of the food supply chain. Increasing efficiency in agriculture makes the entire food system more efficient. Smart irrigation systems powered by AI can utilize predictive analytics to look at satellite data, historical data, soil sensors, and more when determining a crop's water needs. AI is also being used to significantly improve pest detection and minimize the need for unnecessary pesticide applications. Using AI to detect pests is much more precise and less labor intensive than other detection methods. These, and other uses of AI in agriculture are making farming more efficient, more cost effective, and more environmentally sustainable.

TRACEABILITY THROUGH THE SUPPLY CHAIN

For much of Hawaii's food supply we are at the end of very long, complex supply chains. Keeping track of a product with multiple ingredients coming from different locations and going through various manufacturing and packaging steps at other locations can seem daunting, if not impossible. Block chain and devices connected to the Internet of Things (IoT) and equipped with end-to-end traceability have already proven to be gamechangers when it comes to supply chain management. These AI technologies mean companies can more easily track specific products to improve efficiency. Furthermore, if there is a problem with a certain product it's more easily traced and more effectively recalled. Consumers also benefit from improved transparency and can learn about their food's origin and manufacturing information.

FOOD SAFETY MONITORING

Improving food safety may prove to be one of the most important applications of AI. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, "While the food supply in the United States is one of the safest in the world, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that each year roughly 1 out of 6 Americans gets sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die from foodborne diseases. Preventing foodborne illness and death remains a major public health challenge." AI can be applied in a variety of ways to improve food safety. Algorithms to determine shelf-life, virtual reality training tools, IoT robotics to improve sanitation, and analytical AI to determine the likelihood of contamination are just a few examples.

PERSONALIZED NUTRITION

There are a lot of factors that go into each customer's food consumption habits. Medical history, health goals, the culture they grew up in, the availability of certain foods, level of activity, and of course their personal taste. Some of these are easier to control for than others when trying to determine a diet plan, and there is a lot of conflicting information and ideas available in different spaces that may not be right for everyone. People who want to maximize their nutrition can spend a good deal of time and money on expert help. AI is now available that can analyze the relevant information and craft personalized nutrition plans. As this becomes more common it will likely have larger scale impacts on people's eating, and food buying habits.

These are just a few of the areas where food businesses should be ready to see AI making changes to the industry. It's likely that almost every facet of our food systems will be impacted by AI at some point in the next few years. ❁

AI IN FOOD RETAIL

This spring we were pleased to host an event on AI in Food Retail with experts on some different facets of this new tool. Our presenters provided a look at just a few of the ways AI will be impacting food retail now and in the future. Two of our presenters followed up here with some more details about how AI can be used, and is being used in food retail today."



AI & THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF DATA

John Ross, President and CEO IGA Inc.

What does AI mean for grocery retailers? For operations, AI has so many benefits. In the future, we could ask an AI engine to handle scheduling, matching associate needs and work demand schedules to keep the retail floor manned but still let workers balance work and home. Instead of badgering the operations manager in stores, associates could interact with an AI engine in real time. AI-powered scanners could look at items in real time the way a human does. This means figuring out the difference

between a plantain and banana and pricing them accurately in lane through a camera interface, without special stickers, tags or specialized cashier training. AI could monitor shrink in real time too, looking at rate of sales in perishable products and recommending discounts before products turn to waste. One of AI's big advances is its ability to make recommendations in real time to allow human interaction to address a problem before it becomes critical.

For managers, it would shift the way they interact with reports and systems. In the future, AI-powered management tools would allow leaders to ask, "What should I do to increase margins in produce?" rather than having to sift through a mountain of data to find an answer. A natural language interface to product and sales data would be a game-changer for managers. Instead of relying (and waiting for) data analysts to ferret out clues from the hordes of retail data we generate, AI engines can respond to queries directly.

- "Why is shrink growing in deli?"
- "What are three ideas to improve response to my advertising?"
- "Where can I raise prices without alienating customers, and where should I reduce prices to increase draw rate of new customers?"

We've heard these promises before. Every commercial analytics platform promises that their software will make our team smarter. The difference here is that operators and merchants can interact with the data directly, intuitively, and get real time suggestions – not just reports and graphs – without having to be data scientists themselves.

For independent grocery retailers—who have generally lagged behind chains in the ability to adopt new and costly technologies and often don't have access to detailed data analysis—AI's democratization of data could be a game changer. Imagine for a moment this kind of powerful information in the hands of an independent grocer who, by nature of their independence, is nimble enough to make changes on the spot. Independent grocers and their teams could use the data to improve their operations and their customer experience not tomorrow, or next week, or next month – but immediately.

It's a dream scenario come true for independents, and one that could be the key to unlocking a true and lasting competitive advantage.



A CASE STUDY IN REAL WORLD AI USE WITH APP CARD AND FERRI'S IGA

Eran Harel, SVP Corporate Development and Strategic Partnerships, AppCard

AppCard's proprietary AI algorithm allows retailers to regain control over their conversations with their shoppers by learning shoppers' unique buying cycles and delivering the right message and coupons to customers at the right time, increasing conversion and sales. This case study shows how Ferri's IGA created a personalized shopping experience leveraging their

data powered by AppCard.

Ferri's IGA, a small grocery store in Murrysville, Pennsylvania, wanted to enhance shopper engagement and boost coupon redemption rates through the AppCard program. The team at Ferri's IGA focused on creating a shopper-centric approach to best serve their dedicated shoppers. **continued on page 16**



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AI IN FOOD RETAIL continued from page 15

Recognizing the significance of aligning their strategy with their predominantly older shopper base, Ferri's IGA has placed a strong emphasis on shopper engagement. Cashiers played a pivotal role in promoting their AppCard-based rewards program at checkout during every transaction. They encouraged shoppers to enter their contact info at the in-lane touchscreen terminal, facilitating seamless communication between the store and shopper through emails and the AppCard mobile app. The in-lane terminal has streamlined the checkout experience, allowing shoppers to quickly and easily clip and redeem coupons by entering their phone number.

Cashiers are central to Ferri's IGA's journey. Cashiers received \$0.50 for each new shopper they enrolled in the AppCard program. This incentive program resulted in a remarkable 1376 new shoppers between May and August 2023, directly contributing to increased coupon redemption rates.

The store also meticulously crafted a promotional calendar aligned with national holidays and special events. Regular emails are sent to shoppers, providing a preview of upcoming promotions, discounts, bonus points, and exclusive offers.

Innovation remains at the forefront of Ferri's IGA's strategy. Themed holiday promotions in collaboration with the deli and bakery departments, are in the pipeline. Regular email communication offers extra rewards points, enhancing shopper anticipation.

Effective communication with staff, especially the dedicated cashiers, has emerged as a cornerstone of success. Team members have been well-versed in ongoing promotions, and their input and feedback have played a pivotal role in shaping marketing strategies. This collaborative approach ensures alignment in engaging shoppers and promoting the AppCard program.

The success story of Ferri's IGA serves as a testament to the power of a shopper-centric approach, driven by passionate cashier engagement and strategic promotions and driven by AI. By aligning their strategies with the preferences of their loyal shoppers and leveraging technological tools and support provided by AppCard, Ferri's IGA has achieved remarkable results. Ferri's rewards members have spent, on average, \$8.91 more than non-members. In addition, Ferri's rewards members have spent, on average, \$20 more when redeeming points and rewards, which has led Ferri's to a whopping increase in sales of \$346,000 at the end of the first year from launching the program. ❄️

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NAVIGATING CHALLENGES AND BUILDING RESILIENCE:

INSIGHTS FROM HFIA'S LEGISLATIVE TALK STORY PANEL DISCUSSION

This January HFIA was pleased to hold our Legislative Talk Story Panel discussion in person for the first time in several years. Central Pacific Bank generously provided us with a meeting space at their building and the view of the State Capitol was the perfect backdrop for this engaging and informative event.

Our panelists included:

- **Vice Speaker of the House Greggor Ilagan**
- **Senator Tim Richards, Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environment**
- **Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii - The Odom Corporation**
- **Kit Okimoto, Okimoto Corp.**
- **Melissa Pavlicek, Hawai'i Public Policy Advocates, representing Safeway**
- **Moderator, Derek Kurisu, Executive Vice President, KTA Super Stores**

Also in attendance from the legislature were Senator Glenn Wakai who is the Majority Floor Leader and Chair of the Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs; Representative Richard Onishi who serves on the Committees on Consumer Protection & Commerce, Housing, and Transportation; Minority Leader Representative Lauren Matsumoto; Majority Whip Chris Todd, Chair of the Committee on Transportation and; Representative Daniel Holt who Chairs the Economic Development Committee. A number HFIA Retail Members, Supplier Members, and Associate Members participated as well.

Our moderator Derek Kurisu started off the event with some discussion of how important the food industry is, not just because we feed our state and our visitors, but also for the economic contributions the industry makes. Derek highlighted how efficiently and effectively the industry took action to make sure that everyone stayed fed after the August Maui fires. Our

panelists then had the opportunity to introduce themselves and discuss their priorities for the year ahead.

VICE SPEAKER ILAGAN: INFORMED DECISION MAKING

Vice Speaker told us how he got his start in both politics and food policy as a Council Member on the Big Island dealing with the highly contentious issue of the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in local farming. A large number of papaya farmers lived in his district. After a papaya blight years ago, GMO papayas have become critical to the survival of the papaya industry in Hawai'i. Ilagan advocated for these farmers by highlighting the need for informed decision making. He has carried that messaging with him during his four years at the legislature and he touched on some of the areas where state policy can have a big impact on the food industry such as infrastructure, transportation, economic development, and of course agriculture.

SENATOR TIM RICHARDS: FURTHERING THE MESSAGE AND MISSION OF AGRICULTURE

Senator Richards emphasized the need for robust public policy to support agriculture. He outlined Senate priorities, focusing on Maui's recovery, economic growth, and the intertwined relationship between agriculture and the environment. Richards stressed the importance of workforce development for the agriculture sector and the food industry as a whole. He also made an important point about the need for a holistic approach to improving local food production saying, "We can't do one sector at a time. We have to do a bit of everything all at once."

JOE CARTER: CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY ON MULTIPLE FRONTS

The Odom Corporation's commitment to serving Hawai'i has long standing roots and is go-

ing strong. Joe spoke about Odom's investment in sustainability, emergency preparedness, and community support. He's excited about the future of sustainability for the company and their initiatives including a new solar powered facility in Campbell industrial park, a move towards recycled PET in bottles, and making sure their plastic is 100% recyclable including the caps. Joe also talked about the critical role they play in emergency response as a water bottler. They make sure to keep stock levels high during hurricane season, and were able to donate several containers after the Maui fires. Of course Odom makes sure to support their communities in good times as well donating over \$250,000 a year to various community programs, organizations, and events.

KIT OKIMOTO: MEETING CHALLENGES WITH INITIATIVE

Representing a multigenerational independent grocery business with locations outside metro Honolulu Kit provided important insights to some of the challenges faced by businesses in rural areas and in particular on the neighbor islands. Kit was involved in providing direct support to Maui after the wildfires and recently worked with Chad Buck of Hawai'i Food-service Alliance (HFA) to create a pre-covery pod in the Waianae area. He stressed the importance of a collaborative approach to emergency management that includes support for retailers. Kit also touched on other important policy goals such as funding the Double Up Food Bux program and eliminating the General Excise Tax from groceries which would reduce the cost of living for Hawai'i residents.

MELISSA PAVLICEK: THE GROCERY INDUSTRY'S MULTI-FACETED ROLE

Melissa, representing Safeway, outlined the various vital roles grocery stores play in the communities. In addition to providing food these businesses are also manufacturers, property owners and managers, community leaders, renewable energy and sustainability pioneers, transportation partners, pharmacies, and supporters of charities and community organizations. She shared Safeway's experience during emergencies. When the Safeway store in Lahaina was damaged and without power after the fire, their team worked tirelessly to get the store up and running. They understood the need for people have access to essential goods, but also the great importance of returning one thing to normal for their community. Melissa also brought some attention to the importance of continuing to work to improve equity and inclusivity in our industry.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING THE RIGHT POLICY

After each panelist had a chance to talk Derek opened the floor for questions. The following conversation touched on the need for thoughtful policy and the challenges created **CONTINUED ON PAGE 21**



IT'S THE LAW!

DO NOT SELL TOBACCO PRODUCTS OR ELECTRONIC SMOKING DEVICES TO ANYONE UNDER 21

Hawaii law (HRS §712-1258) prohibits the sale of all tobacco products, including electronic smoking devices also known as e-cigarettes or vaping products, to anyone under the age of 21 years.

Retailers and their clerks must:

- Post legal signage at or near the point of sale where tobacco products or electronic smoking devices are sold.
- Check photo ID of everyone under the age of 21 who attempts to purchase any tobacco product.
- Only sell tobacco products to customers aged 21 and over.

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NEW MEMBERS



WAI KOKO

Proud to be a Hawaii-owned and operated business—Wai Koko Coconut Water got its start on the island of Kauai in 2012 and quickly spread across the state as people discovered its pure flavor and natural benefits. Whether you're running a marathon, practicing yoga, or just hanging out at the beach, with each sip of Wai Koko coconut water you get healthy hydration.

Supporting Hawaii's community and local organizations is an essential key to the success of Wai Koko Coconut Water. We are pleased to support awesome organizations such as Special Olympics Hawaii, 41 Trouble Youth Boxing Club, Malama Kaua'i, The Ke'ala Foundation, NAMI Hawaii and many others.

We recently celebrated 11 years of incredible support across the islands, and look forward to many more decades of serving the islands with a healthy and naturally sweet product and a brand that Hawaii can be proud to call its own.



HEINEKEN USA

We are HEINEKEN® USA

It started with the iconic green bottle. Back in 1933, Heineken® was the first import to arrive in a post-prohibition America that was thirsty for new flavors. Today, in addition to our beloved flagship brew, our diverse U.S. portfolio includes more than 20 beers, seltzers, spirit-based drinks, and ciders. Though our headquarters are located in beautiful White Plains, New York, our 200+ dynamic employees are spread all across the country, capturing the distinctive character of each diverse region. As the leading importer of high-end beer, we continue innovating throughout the U.S. with new brands, products, and always, that famous green bottle that started it all.



BLUE OCEAN MARICULTURE

Blue Ocean Mariculture is a pioneering force in sustainable aquaculture, specializing in

the responsible cultivation of premium seafood. Committed to safeguarding ocean ecosystems, we employ state-of-the-art farming practices that prioritize environmental stewardship and the well-being of marine life. Our mission is to deliver high-quality, traceable seafood to consumers while minimizing our ecological footprint. By harnessing innovation and technology, we strive to redefine the future of aquaculture, ensuring a harmonious balance between meeting global seafood demand and preserving the world's oceans for generations to come. Join us in our commitment to a Blue Ocean future, where responsible farming practices lead to a more sustainable and thriving aquatic environment.



HAWAIIAN SODA CO.

Hawaiian Soda Co. was born on the beaches of Hawai'i when our founders Caesar and Gina Ho were wishing for some tropical refreshment that they could feel good about drinking that also tastes good too. That's why they set off to create a line of tropical island sodas with real ingredients, as nature intended. Added Sugar? Nope. Artificial junk? None. Preservatives? Not here, brah.

Headquartered in Honolulu,

HI and proudly AAPI owned, Hawaiian Soda Co is excited to bring you a taste of paradise. We've carefully crafted a beverage we feel good about sharing with our ohana – and when you've got a Hawaiian Soda in your hand everyone is ohana. Do we think you'll love it? You bet your sweet pineapples we do.



FIRESTONE WALKER

Born in a humble shed on the back-forty of the family vineyard, Firestone Walker is a California beer company like no other—founded by two brothers-in-law who simply wanted to make the perfect beer. The story begins with Adam Firestone (a.k.a. The Bear) and David Walker (a.k.a. The Lion) debating the subject of beer. California has been our home since we started in 1996. We live and brew here, and we draw energy from the communities that surround us. Our beers are available nationwide, yet they always reflect where they come from—a land where creativity and innovation are the rule. This is what it means to us to be a California beer company. At Firestone Walker, Beer Before Glory is our mantra for reminding ourselves we do what we do because of the

MEMBER NEWS



Safeway Nourishing Neighbors Program Has Another Successful Year

This winter Safeway wrapped up a very successful nourishing neighbors campaign that extended from October to December. Hawaii customers were able to easily make donations at checkout or online. Their contributions went to one of several local food banks including the Hawaii Foodbank, the Maui Food Bank, and the Hawaii Foodbank of Kauai. The program has a big impact in delivering essential food items, as well as a sense of community. In Kauai alone the program provided approximately 22,000 meals for neighbors in need.



Microlearning with the Coca-Cola IGA Institute

In the grocery industry, it is imperative for store owners to prioritize continuous training and keep their teams well-versed in the latest compliance and regulatory requirements to uphold operational excellence and ensure customer satisfaction.

Thankfully, the IGA Coca-Cola Institute offers a wide range of updated courses and resources to simplify the training process. Find out what's new, how to update your 2024 learning plans, and register your team for the International Supermarket Management Course (ISMC).

What's New? Microlearning

One of the most exciting new offerings from the IGA Coca-Cola Institute is also the smallest. Introducing microlearning, or On the Go Learning, an innovative learning system developed at Harvard Medical

MEMBER NEWS CONTINUED

School that combines gaming with a scientifically proven methodology that increases long-term knowledge retention by up to 170%. The Institute is deploying microlearning courses to retailers across the globe to help them meet their training needs effectively, which includes a "spaced education" methodology that is based on the neuroscience of how human memory works. Students enrolled in this option receive a daily micro-lesson that is 2-3 minutes long.



Dole Health, Wellness, and Hunger-Relief

Dole Food Company has started the year a busy year by extending its partnership with No Kid Hungry, a campaign of Share Our Strength, committed to ending hunger and poverty. The company's alliance with the national nonprofit began in summer 2020 in response to the impact of COVID-19 when schools closed and millions more U.S. children were left facing hunger.

Dole's ongoing work with No Kid Hungry includes nutrition education, fundraising support and at-retail initiatives to help the thirteen million kids in the U.S. who are living with hunger to have access to three healthy meals a day.

The produce leader is also the presenting sponsor of Get Fit for No Kid Hungry, an influencer-based health and wellness fundraising initiative designed to rally the nation's top fitness and nutrition experts to host health-related livestream classes and web-based instruction throughout January. In addition to sponsoring the program, Dole is encouraging its own partner bloggers and influencers to inspire their followers to get fit and give back in the New Year by donating to No Kid Hungry.



Piko Provisions Launches New Line of Purees

Piko Provisions is expanding their 100% Hawaii-grown and made product lines with investment and support from Kamehameha Schools. Their new products will include additional fresh fruit and vegetable purees as well as puffs, finger foods and juices to connect local families with healthy, delicious local food for their growing families.

The new stage 1 purees which will be going live in March!



HFIA Director of Operations Alexis Chapman, HFIA Executive Director Lauren Zirbel, ABC Stores Employee Relations & Government Affairs Manager Curtis Higashiyama, Minority Leader Representative Lauren Matsumoto, Okimoto Corp. CFO Kit Okimoto



Chamber of Commerce Hawaii Government Relations Manager Nadia Garcia, Representative Daniel Holt, Commodity Forwarders Inc. General Manager Gemma Brokaw and Kaleo Yamada.

PHOTO BY ANTHONY CONSILIO

HFIA LEGISLATIVE TALK STORY PANEL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

when legislation has unintended negative consequences. There was a good deal of consensus on certain areas where action needs to be taken, and audience and panel members shared ideas on what types of policy at the state level can help create positive change.

Melissa brought up the roadblocks and long timelines that many businesses face when dealing with County Permitting and several others on the panel and in the audience agreed. Rep Ilagan highlighted the need for advocacy and for the State and county to work together to improve these processes. Furthering the discussion Rep Matsumoto offered an example of how certain regulations had contributed to the closing of her family's farm. Policy is never enacted in a vacuum and legislation intended to solve one problem can have wider impacts that may create other challenges.

Emergency management is of course on everyone's mind this year and the food industry plays a critical role. As Derek said, after the Maui fires the industry took action, they didn't wait to be asked to help. Because this has been the standard for emergencies in our state HFIA President and Executive Director Lauren Zirbel encouraged everyone to look at the importance of emergency management agencies establishing memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with food industry partners. This would help make responses more efficient and help make sure businesses can get reimbursed for their contributions when possible. Ethan West, CEO of Piko Provisions and HFIA member, has a background in agriculture and brought up ways to incorporate local food and ag into emergency planning and prevention. Senator Richards talked about the importance of creating the right infrastructure to handle emergencies. Rep Ilagan discussed the bi-partisan legislative package on emergency management that has been introduced, he also mentioned the work done by the Food, Water, & Other Supplies Working Group.

Rep Ilagan closed the conversation with some helpful insight into the legislature, he cited the fact that over 3000 bills get introduced but only a small fraction get passed each year. He underscored the need to focus on what is actionable, what can get passed by the legislature and successfully implemented by the administration.

We look forward to working with all our panelists to advocate for policy that will advance the mission of HFIA and support our members as they feed our state. ❁

ENHANCING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: INSIGHTS AND INITIATIVES

BY LAUREN ZIRBEL

In the aftermath of the Lahaina wildfires, our members showcased remarkable dedication in providing crucial support. Inspired by their actions, the Hawai'i Food Industry Association (HFIA) is taking proactive steps to play a more active role in emergency management planning. Through collaboration with industry and government entities, we gained unique insights into the emergency management dynamics on Maui, spurring our commitment to share these insights and contribute to the improvement of emergency management strategies before the next crisis.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE CONTACT LIBRARY

One key lesson learned was the challenge many faced in reaching the right contacts for coordinated efforts during the Maui wildfires. To streamline this process, HFIA is collaborating with stakeholders to establish an emergency response contact library. This resource will include contact information for emergency management government agencies, non-government agencies coordinating mass feedings, and busi-

nesses offering support. By having this information readily accessible, those responding to emergencies will be better connected, allowing them to focus on providing support rather than searching for contact details.

MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING (MOUs)

Acknowledging the remarkable spirit of Hawai'i communities during crises, HFIA is advocating for the creation of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between emergency management agencies and businesses. These MOUs aim to organize and harness community contributions effectively. By formalizing agreements, businesses and state agencies can plan more efficiently, ensuring resources are both needed and available before disaster strikes. This strategic approach will also prevent gaps and overlaps in contributions during emergencies and facilitate the proper allocation of reimbursements from federal, state, or county agencies.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT WAREHOUSING

Recognizing the unpredictability of emergencies, HFIA is addressing the challenges of estimating and maintaining food supplies during crises. Variables such as individual adherence to recommendations for a two-week supply, seasonal fluctuations, and the reliance on barge deliveries for neighbor islands complicate the



task. Critical infrastructure's proximity to sea level adds another layer of complexity, as flooding or tsunamis could disrupt the usual means of supply storage and delivery.

To mitigate these challenges, HFIA supports Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency's (HI-EMA) top priority: the construction of dedicated warehouses for emergency response. Bills like HB1930 and SB2924 are currently under consideration to secure funding for these warehouses, ensuring Hawai'i residents have access to essential items even during large-scale emergencies.

In conclusion, while emergencies are inherently unpredictable, HFIA is committed to learning from past experiences and working collaboratively with members, agencies, NGOs, and other partners to enhance Hawai'i's emergency preparedness and resilience. Together, we strive to be better prepared for whatever challenges the future may bring. 🌿

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