


ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

Airport Authority Bill Making Progress

One of the best ideas that got off to a good start at the Legislature is Senate Bill 3072, calling for the creation of an Airport Authority. It is sponsored by a remarkable 24 of 25 state senators, including Sen. Gil Kahahele, who made this one of the three last bills he signed on to before he passed away. The measure, under the leadership of Senate Transportation and Energy Committee chairwoman Lorraine Inouye of Hawaii Island, will go a long way in addressing many of the problems and challenges that have plagued our airports statewide for decades.

The multi-jurisdictional aspect of the airports has led to conflicting objectives and accountability issues. It didn't help that a recent national customer-satisfaction survey gave unsatisfactory grades to two of the state's top airports.

Taking a page from other jurisdictions in the U.S. that have done this, the bill mandates that a five-person board of directors with business and management backgrounds, appointed by the governor, Senate president and House speaker, be charged with hiring an experienced administrator to oversee the operations of this independent state agency. Its purpose will be to implement "airport industry best practices ... and support efficient development, management and operation of the state's airports and aeronautical facilities."

What is refreshing to wit-ness during the deliberations of this bill is the reaction and response of state Department of Transportation director Ford Fuchigami. Rather than acting



State Tourney MVP Chanelle Molina, bound for Washington state, receives the 2016 Gender Equity Sports award from Basketball Jamboree coordinator Mona Faasoa and the author

PHOTO FROM MUFU HANNEMANN

as a roadblock or offering excuses on how this will hurt the DOT because he is losing part of his fiefdom, he has been extremely accommodating and cooperative. The only caveat he offered when he testified in favor of the bill's passage is that the implementation date of the new authority be moved to 2018 to allow more time for an orderly transition — a reasonable request by a level-headed and open-minded government official, whose actions demonstrate that he is

all about seeking solutions to fix our problems.

• The 23rd Wahine Basketball Jamboree, featuring top student-athletes from across the state competing alongside former collegiate all-stars, took place in Manoa. This year, 60 players from public and private schools and ex-collegians competed — our most ever. In addition, eight ball clubs from all over Oahu squared off in our 12-and-under and 14-and-under brackets.

Despite a grueling season

and state tournament, the Molina sisters from champion Konawaena, whose school won its seventh championship in 13 years, were front and center at the jamboree. Chanelle, Celenia and Cherilyn Molina made a special effort to join their fellow athletes, demonstrating the camaraderie and sportsmanship that have typified this sister act and our annual gathering. Also, four players from Kapaa and Kauai high schools made the trek to Oahu to participate.

Chanelle, an exceptional senior who's headed to Washington State University this fall, received our Gender Equity Award for her contributions to girls basketball over the years. Chanelle was on our Team Aloha for three years, beginning as a freshman, and led the team to a title at an NCAA-sanctioned tournament in Phoenix two years ago. And her years at Konawaena were punctuated with three out of four state championships. I cannot think of a more fitting representative of girls sports and the progress they've enjoyed under Title IX.

Having sponsored and organized the jamboree now for almost a quarter-century, it's particularly gratifying for me to see the growth of so many of these outstanding athletes. Shawna Lei Kuehu, for one, was in one of our early jamborees when she and her twin sister Shaena Lyn, played for a club team from Aiea. Pretty soon, the Kuehus were representing Dennis Akena's Kalakaua program and then became stars at Punahou, all the while participating in the jamboree. Both were on my first Team Aloha that won a Nike tournament

title in Santa Barbara. Shawna Lei went on to play for the UH Rainbow Wahine, and judging by her performance at the jamboree as a player-coach for the championship White team, she hasn't lost a bit of her on-the-court talent and poise.

Thanks to the performances we saw at the jamboree, our Team Aloha selection committee will be naming the 2016 all-stars who will head to Arizona in mid-April to participate in the Adidas tournament. The girls will be coached by Konawaena's Bobbie Awa, who could lay claim to being one of the finest coaches in the nation, taking over the helm from Fran Villarmia-Kahawai, who's led the team for a number of years.

Speaking of high school hoops, hats off to Iolani's boys basketball team for capturing

its 11th state championship over a young, talented and scrappy Punahou squad. Led by towering 6-foot-9 Hugh Hogland, savvy head coach Dean Shimamoto's ballers also won the extremely competitive ILH crown, where at one point in the season they were at the bottom of the league. The ambidextrous Hogland will be returning for another year. If he continues to improve the way he has, coupled with his strong work ethic, Hogland could go down as the best big man to come out of a Hawaii high school in the modern era. Then he'll have a nice problem on his hands: Will it be volleyball or basketball when he heads off to college?

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