



ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

At Long Last, City Council Reins In TVRs

My hat's off to Honolulu City Council, which voted unanimously to approve Bill 89, the legislation that imposes tough regulations on the thousands of illegal transient vacation rentals that have evaded taxes and disrupted neighborhoods across O'ahu and the state.

In short, this measure will allow rentals to continue in resort-zoned areas. Permits will be issued for about 1,715 additional bed-and-breakfast establishments, meaning an operation where an owner is present. Whole-home rentals will be prohibited. The end result should mean all vacation rentals will have to be approved and regulated, and the operators will pay their relevant taxes. It should also open up the marketplace for local residents seeking to find affordable rentals.

The Council deserves all the credit for this long-overdue measure. It was the Council that re-drafted an administration bill that limped out of the Planning Commission. Finally, after several hours of public testimony and debate, it was the Council that approved Bill 89 on a 9-0 vote.

Of all the measures that were introduced, Bill 89 was the legislative vehicle selected by Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association from the very beginning of this arduous undertaking to sort out the numerous approaches to dealing with illegal vacation rentals. We said time and time again that the hotel industry welcomed competition, but that we firmly opposed illegal,



The author (center) poses with LA Rams cheerleaders, who taught and performed at a cheer clinic June 15 at 'Iolani School. PHOTO COURTESY JARED HIGASHI

tax-avoiding operations that were not playing fair and that negatively impacted communities across the 808.

It's remarkable how disruptive an online phenomenon can become. I recall that, as mayor, we basically only heard rumblings from Kailua and the North Shore. Airbnb was founded in mid-2008. Since then, these rentals have proliferated in just the past few years, as some property owners have taken advantage of lax government regulation and oversight.

In my testimony to Honolulu City Council on the morning of the final vote, I urged them to send a strong message to the mayor with a unanimous vote to preclude any equivocation on his part. Thankfully, Honolulu now is positioned to have one of the state's toughest vacation rental measures — thus sending a strong message to the state that it needs to do likewise.

Rams Score Big With Clinics

In advance of the Los Angeles Rams-Dallas Cowboys preseason game on Aug. 17, Rams star safety John Johnson III, Rams legend and former UH Warrior Pisa Tinoisamoa, and the Rams cheerleaders visited O'ahu recently to offer clinics for local athletes.

This was part of a partnership between HLTA, Hawai'i Tourism Authority and Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau to maximize the community benefits of the \$2 million the state is investing in the game.

At Farrington High School back on June 14, Tinoisamoa and the Rams donated football cleats worn by the players to student-athletes. The Cleats for Character program, led by Tinoisamoa, involved a discussion about the merits of good character, the importance of goal-setting, and the transferable life skills that can be attained through hard work and perseverance. Pisa,

who credits former University of Hawai'i coach June Jones for turning his life around, spoke passionately about overcoming odds. Farrington

head coach Daniel Sanchez complimented him "for communicating exactly what our players needed to hear."

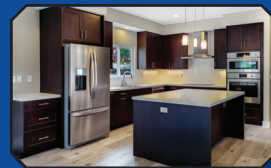
Then, June 14-15 at 'Iolani School, the 7-on-7 Passing and Big Man Championships featured 300 students from the eight top high school football teams representing O'ahu, Kaua'i, Maui and Hawai'i Island. The event included pool play games, tournaments, skill stations, and competitions and autograph sessions with Johnson and Tinoisamoa. The high school athletes and coaches from Hilo, Kapa'a and Lāhaināluna who were flown in for the festivities were "incredibly happy" to be included. Kudos to 'Iolani for its outstanding facilities and to JPS Hawai'i for providing logistical support and scores of volunteers and officials.

Also on June 15, the LA Rams Cheer Camp was held for 300 young people. They were led in warmup and stretching routines, as well as a choreographed dance and treated to a special number by the Rams cheerleaders.

Mililani football coach Rod York hailed the clinic as "awesome" and a "first-class event" that "brought out the best" in the student-athletes, while Barbara Hamocan, 'Iolani's varsity cheer coach, praised the Rams cheer session as an experience where "our kids have memories to last a lifetime, and I know we'll use the material we learned in our games." Obviously, when an event like this goes this well, the inevitable question is when can we expect the next one? Stay tuned.

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