

Alberta de Jetley - Candidate for the Lanai Seat on the Maui County Council
Alberta de Jetley Campaign Committee
P. O. Box 630601, Lanai, HI 96763
Email: adejetley@ gmail.com Ph./Text: 808-649-0808

HOTELPAC – 2020 Candidate Questionnaire (Maui County)

1) The future of tourism in Hawai'i

Despite tourism's status as one of our state's top economic drivers, the COVID-19 pandemic has led some to call for our economy to diversify away from tourism. HLTA's longstanding position has been that our economy should look to diversify within tourism, i.e., develop and expand industries that complement tourism. Would you support this policy given the challenge of identifying industries that could immediately replace the number of jobs and revenue tourism generates for our state's economy? *I would support it but visitors are no longer content to sit at the beach or alongside a pool. They want to go out and see what the locals are doing and enjoying. That is where a lot of the problems are, locals feel visitors are taking over all of the places that they enjoy too. We need to figure out a way to control overcrowding and not turn every beach and scenic spot into a commercial war zone. What are your proposals for diversification? It would be difficult to find another industry that could replace the lodging industry and even if we did, it would take years to develop it and retrain our workforce. However, that said, we could consider refocusing the industry to target older visitors to consider being residents in assisted living facilities (former hotels) emphasizing wellness and health with Hawaii's good climate and varied activities.*

2) Tourism Management

HLTA has long maintained that we believe in the "quality" tourism model rather than the "quantity" tourism model. Effective execution of this responsible management model takes many forms, one being the establishment of user impact fees at popular visitor attractions such as O'ahu's Hanauma Bay. Do you support user impact fees? Do you have other ideas that would embrace this model? *Yes, impact fees help. Haleakala National Park has successfully managed to implement a reservations system for sunrise. We must also limit commercial activities that invade public parks and beaches that are heavily used by locals. If we imposed fees on rental cars, that could reduce our road traffic and increase private tour businesses for visitors. The road to Hana is an example of too much traffic, making it a nightmare for residents dodging tourist traffic all day long. Stop pandering to the airlines, we don't need cheap tours coming to Hawaii.*

3) Real Property Tax

Hotels and lodgings historically have been among the highest real property taxpayers in all counties, paying from \$10.70 to \$13.90 per \$1,000 of assessed value. In FY2019-2020 alone, hotels were seven of the top ten taxpayers based on the amount of taxes levied. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hotels have already come due on one installment of real property taxes, even though many of them have not generated revenue since March. As our industry looks to recover from the pandemic, will you oppose any increase in real property taxes over the next three years? Five years? *Yes, I oppose any increases in real property taxes over the next five*

years. It may take that long for our economy to recover from this pandemic. I think we will see even more businesses closing down before we can even begin to reopen our state.

4) Transient Vacation Rentals

HLTA's has always been one of fairness; i.e., legal TVRs such as those on AirBnB or VRBO should be allowed to operate in areas that have been zoned for resorts so long as the property owner pays the real property taxes associated with a resort property, as well as the GET and TAT. Where do you stand on this issue? Would you support a measure to increase enforcement to rein in the proliferation of properties that are operating illegally? Moreover, would you support an increase in the amount of the fine assessed to illegal operations? *First of all, I think it is the County's responsibility to monitor TVRs and issue permits to them. Every community should decide what their tolerance level is (the amount of TVRs in their neighborhoods). This is already happening on Molokai and Lanai. Even if they are operating in an area zoned for resorts, all TVRs must be registered although I think those in a rental association may be counted as one entity. I support enforcement and an increase of the assessed fines, especially for repeat offenders. They should pay a penalty and be prohibited from operating as a TVR in the future.*

5) Homelessness Solutions

In recent years, HLTA has dedicated significant time and resources to address homelessness in our community. In addition to funds generated through our Visitor Industry Charity Walk, we secured \$1 million in State matching funds that we used to subsidize the efforts of homeless service providers around the state. Please provide a detailed description of an initiative that you would implement to address homelessness in your county. *Very few people are homeless by choice. In many cases, it has become impossible for them to find housing because many landlords don't want pets, children, or tenants who they think will skip out on the rent. A county-by-county initiative to provide rent subsidies to kupuna, veterans, the disabled and families with young children could work. The rent money could be paid directly to the landlord along with a security deposit. People have been waiting years for affordable housing to be built. But now especially, they just cannot afford to buy one. We must provide safe housing. While we are waiting for housing, could we use empty parking lots where businesses have moved out to provide safe zones for families with children to sleep in their cars? Or in empty commercial buildings? How about adding portable toilets, showers and maybe even a laundry area? Schools must provide transportation for children who are homeless; we can take it a step further by making sure they have clean clothes to go to school in. I really admire the non-profit agencies who specialize in working with the homeless and thank HLTA for providing grants to them.*

6) Sustainability in the Visitor Industry

Hawai'i's visitor industry has gone to great lengths to make its businesses more "green" and eco-friendly. What government incentives would you propose or support to help our industry bolster these initiatives? *Tax incentives help.*

7) Visitor Industry Health, Safety & Security Standards

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread throughout our state, it became clear that establishing health and hygiene standards would be critical to restoring trust in our industry. As such, we developed the HLTA Health, Safety & Security Standards. These were created after reviewing the latest information from the CDC, WHO, and EPA, as well as input from industry stakeholders. Our standards were submitted to the State Department of Health for its review. After receiving DOH approval, we shared our standards with the governor, HI-EMA, State Attorney General, and all the mayors. Please answer yes or no: Would you support the adoption of our standards as statewide policy for lodging properties? If not, please explain. *Yes, I support it. It is obvious a lot of time was spent on developing it.*

- 8) **Public Safety**To date, HLTA has held two highly successful Visitor Public Safety Conferences on O‘ahu. These conferences have brought together hotel management, security professionals, lawmakers, law enforcement, social service providers, and other stakeholders to discuss possible solutions to issues such as late-night cabarets and the need for more security cameras throughout Waikiki, the homeless population in Chinatown, and a spike in shoplifting around the island. Each conference led to significant progress in addressing these community issues. Neighbor Island Candidates Only: Would you support HLTA in convening a Visitor Public Safety Conference in your county in 2021? If so, what specific public health and safety issues would you like to see discussed? *Yes, I would support it. A big public health issue is our lack of public restrooms or porta-toilets in our parks and in areas where the homeless are congregating, especially where they are camping alongside highways illegally. We must provide basic facilities even if they shouldn't be there.*
- 9) **If elected, what do you hope to accomplish during your first year in office**, which will undoubtedly be one of the most challenging and difficult times the state and counties have ever faced? *My goal is to take care of people first! Since so many residents are now unemployed, (the state's Unemployment Office still hasn't caught up on its backlog and I have personally been unemployed since March 15 and have not received a penny from UI to date), many residents are out of money and have been relying on food from the food drives and food banks. On Lāna‘i more than 200 cars come to the food giveaways where they received a bag of fresh lettuce, mixed produce, and maybe some fruit. They start lining up an hour beforehand, and the ones at the very end of the line may not get anything but lettuce. I want to initiate a food stamp system so people can go to a store of their choice and buy what they need. I want to work collaboratively with other councilmembers so we can move forward on affordable housing projects that have been blasted apart from the "Not in my backyard" protesters. We need to freeze all new taxes, tighten up our belts, and stop creating more county agencies. We need to focus on how we can help our businesses reopen. Along the way, we have to understand that we cannot create more agricultural ventures such as small farms overnight. Farming is a tough business and our resort/tourism work force will not return to the fields for jobs. The days of large plantations are over. My personal passion is non-profit agencies that assist kupuna, veterans, the disabled, children, the homeless, and yes, feral cats too. Also on the agenda for me is to start planning an assisted care living facility on Lāna‘i where our residents who are forced to stay on Maui or Oahu can come home to live the rest of their days here.*
- 10) **Please share one fun fact about yourself.** *When people ask me about my work experiences, I like to say, "I was a street walker in Waikiki." Back in the 60s, pre-fax machines, texting and the internet, I worked as a travel representative in Waikiki for a company named Contact. We*

took reservations for neighbor island hotels and had an open to book...at the end of the day, all of the bookings we made were phoned to them (with long distance rates). My favorite part of my job was delivering brochures up and down Kalakaua Avenue, "street-walking" and visiting with all of the travel desks along both sides of the Avenue!

Mahalo for inviting me to be a part of your interviews for candidates. I worked in the hotel & travel industry from 1964 until 1984. I began my career as a writer in 1985 and was the publisher and editor of two community newspapers, *Hana News* and *Lāna'i Today*. I am also the author of a pictorial history book about Lāna'i published by Arcadia Publishing Co. for its *Images of America* series of history books about small communities across America. Until Covid-19 closed us down, I managed a taxi company on Lāna'i and did private tours for visitors.

Respectively submitted by

Alberta de Jetley – Candidate for the Lāna'i seat on the Maui County Council

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