



ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

Here's A Vote For Lowering The Voting Age

Sixteen-year-olds may earn the right to vote in federal and local elections, if the Council of the District of Columbia, the legislative branch of the capital's government, has its way.

The solons were inspired by the high school students who have marshaled a nationwide gun-control campaign following the murders at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida and similar mass killings across the country, many of them in schools.

The last time the voting age was lowered was almost a half-century ago, when Congress passed the 26th Amendment giving citizens 18 and older the right to vote. I recall being a college freshman at the time and having the privilege of voting in 1972. I haven't missed an election since.

Today, a few municipalities

have lowered the voting age for local elections, but the District of Columbia is considered a state jurisdiction in certain circumstances and so it can propose this action regarding elections for federal offices, like president and Congress.

Maybe it's time Hawai'i looked at following the District of Columbia's lead as a means of stimulating interest in our democracy among our young people and giving them an incentive to get involved.

Our consistently low voter turnout, which should be an embarrassment to the entire community, might be reversed with an infusion of youthful energy and enthusiasm. With high school students having the vote, mock debates and mock elections would be "mock" no more. Civics and history courses could be transformed into the actual exer-

cise of democracy.

We have student representatives on the state Board of Education and parent-teacher-student associations. They are engaged in countless civic activities through their schools, clubs and churches. Our young people deserve a lot of credit for their model citizenship and leadership, so why not give them the vote, even if it's only for local elections?

It's an idea worth considering.

Hooray For Hoopsters

Team Aloha, the all-star girls squad representing prep basketball programs from across Hawai'i, won all five of its games in the competitive Elite is Earned Spring Invitational basketball tournament, held this past weekend in Walnut Creek, California, to capture the championship. The squad competed

in the 17-and-under group of 40 teams. The tournament was sanctioned by the NCAA and attracted about 100 college coaches and scouts.

After pummeling four teams to reach the finals, Team Aloha entered the championship game against a highly regarded Cal Sparks San Diego squad. In their semifinals contest, the Sparks defeated a talented team from Nevada, scoring 75 points as one of their guards hit seven of eight 3-pointers. But Team Aloha held the Sparks in check, and prevailed in a 45-38 thriller to place first in its bracket.

This basketball group, the 12th in Team Aloha's history, consisted of underclassmen in grades 9-11. Team Aloha was led by yours truly as its founder and head coach, and I was ably assisted by several prep basketball veterans: Sherice Ajifu of Mid-Pacific Institute; Rodney Cavaco of 'Aiea, who doubles as an academic counselor to help students and parents with college eligibility; and attorney Rodney Veary, who has coached at 'Iolani.

We made a terrific impression on referees, opposing coaches, college scouts and folks with Hawai'i ties who were there. While our offense was outstanding, our stifling defense, which held opponents to an average of about 35 points a game, paved the way for points to be scored off our transition game.

Maryknoll's Kamalu Kamakawiwo'ole was scintillating offensively with her drives and 3-pointers, and Kalina Obrey of Kamehameha-Kapālama anchored the

defense and impressed with her all-around play. Mid-Pacific's Brilie Kovaloff and Konawaena's Caiyle Kaupu also performed extremely well, as did Kahuku's inside-outside formidable duo of Sisi Kaufusi and Leiah Naeata.

Also contributing valuable minutes were Kelsie Imai of Waiākea, Konawaena's Taniya Uchida, Jalen Tanuvasa of Maryknoll and Kalani's Alayna Akiona. Waipahu's Teves Suan and Paige Fahrni of Mid-Pacific also stepped up when they entered the games.

Team Aloha is an outgrowth of a girls Basket-

ball Jamboree, which has been held annually since 1994. The Jamboree was organized to give players an opportunity to showcase their talents and promote Title IX and the cause of gender equity. We then established Team Aloha in 2006 with the assistance of former UH Rainbow Wāhine basketball coach, and now Kaiser vice principal, Dana Takehara-Dias to give the girls exposure to Mainland competition and college coaches. Team Aloha has won a remarkable 80 percent of its games and captured its second crown in four years.

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Elite is Earned tournament director Chris Hansen (far left) poses with Team Aloha coaches and players for their championship photo in Walnut Creek, California. PHOTO COURTESY TEAM ALOHA

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