

Moving positively forward together

THE CHAMBER VIEW by Pamela Tumpap



This has been an incredible week with a new president and the opening of our legislative ses-

sion. All around, there is a strong realization of the challenging times we are in, an urgency to move things positively forward, and a hope that renewal and innovation will result from this difficulty and our country, state and communities will emerge better and stronger having gone through it.

In his inauguration speech, President Obama called for "hope over fear and unity of purpose over conflict and discord." He reminded us that change has come to America; that all Americans have duties unto themselves, their nation and the world; and that it is time to begin again and remake America. In moving forward, he shared the need to create jobs, restore sciences, increase alternative energy, address climate change, transform schools, manage government spending and take more of a bipartisan approach in policy-

making.

These same sentiments were echoed this week in the state House of Representatives during the opening of the Legislature.

House Speaker Calvin Say highlighted several economic predictions for 2009, including that unemployment is expected to rise to 5.8 percent and the Council on Revenues is projecting a 3 percent real property tax revenue decrease, equating to a \$1.8 billion cumulative budget deficit.

Say called for joint efforts between legislative bodies to resolve these challenges and shared five areas that the House will address in 2009. They are:

- Maintaining basic social and health services.
- Maintaining the level of education in the classroom.
- Avoiding government layoffs.
- Working with the federal government on stimulus packages.
- Treating this budget as an opportunity for change.

Republican Rep. Lynn Finnegan discussed the importance of supporting key industries — tourism, construction and the military — while reaching toward long-range goals.

She called for support of the Hawaii Tourism Authority and further exploring niche areas such as "heritage" tourism, streamlining the \$1.9 billion in construction projects, supporting the Hawaii Clean Energy initiative, reducing unnecessary regulation on businesses, not raising taxes, encouraging entrepreneurship, fostering investment and supporting Act 221 (the high-tech tax credit investment initiative) and advancing science, technology and engineering skills programs.

Democratic Rep. Blake Oshiro said we need to look at government spending and the procurement process to make certain that farmers and small businesses are included in the process as provided for by law. He said the House supports the Hawaii Clean Energy bill and noted the House will also look at alternative ways to empower counties and communities to further utilize alternative energy. He too called for bold initiatives, local efforts (noting that we can't just rely on the federal government) and cooperation among all, saying that only our collective heads and hearts will overcome the issues we face.

Some skeptics may say that much of what has been said

these past few days is "just talk" and what is more important is the actions that occur.

Let us not allow it to be "just talk." We must hold elected officials accountable, move forward with creating a sustainable future using the triple bottom line as our lens of sustainability (economy, environment and social well-being), and get the work of the people done.

The time for sitting on our laurels is past. Let's roll up our sleeves and work together: invest in our educational system to give our children a solid foundation; support our existing industries; move forward with capital improvement projects; strengthen and diversify our economy to guard against future economic downturns; reduce our dependency on fossil fuels; encourage entrepreneurship; cut superfluous and burdensome regulation; buy Maui First and support locally owned businesses before purchasing abroad; choose comprehensive solutions that leverage resources and offer winning scenarios for all concerned (not just a particular group); and move forward together.

■ Pamela Tumpap
is president of the Maui
Chamber of Commerce.