

MONEY MATTERS

# Vote for real solutions, not rhetoric

## THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



As the Maui Chamber of Commerce staff and members, other businesses, and residents

throughout Maui and Hawaii continue to be upbeat and optimistic, rebuilding from challenging economic times, we cannot be blind to the tough realities that threaten our economic recovery and future. We must have a plan to propel us forward, removing barriers and mitigating negative impacts. And to accomplish this, we must see beyond politics and rhetoric and vote for those who will make a real difference in our lives.

Continuing to jeopardize our future are a number of harsh truths, such as a:

- High cost of doing business.
- Size of government we can't afford.
- Broken educational system.
- Plethora of regulations.
- Shattered unemployment

fund and system.

- An essentially one-party system.

- An overreliance on government systems and funding.

These problems injure businesses, hamper job growth, limit opportunities for our youth, contribute to a lack of checks and balances vital for democracy, add to the looming government debt (more than \$1 billion liability in unfunded government employee retirement and benefits alone), and finance more government and regulations to the detriment of businesses and the people of this state.

For years, people have expressed their disgust with politics. They want to hold elected officials accountable for actions that hurt them. They are sick and tired of a growing government financed on the backs of the people and businesses that are struggling to survive. People want real solutions and affordable answers.

That is why the chamber — a champion for businesses, the backbone of our community — endorses business-friendly candidates. We need like-minded individuals to tackle issues that plague Hawaii and to

create positive change. And, we need the right person at the helm of our state, which is why we support Duke Aiona for governor.

Recently, The Maui News explained, "We can't afford government." We came to the same conclusion: In our candidate endorsement process, Mr. Abercrombie emphatically stated that he opposes a general excise tax increase, and instead would reallocate funds and obtain more federal dollars: a double-edged sword since such funding can be short-lived and add to our dependence on government. We feel his plan ultimately would require tax increases.

We also were surprised by a number of Abercrombie's comments in various forums. When we asked about a Department of Education audit, he indicated he would not be opposed to one and the context of his response left the impression that he was OK with it. Yet, in the Maui Economic Development Board's gubernatorial forum, he stated it was the "last thing" we needed. We disagree.

Abercrombie also shared

with us that he felt a move by some in the Legislature to take away the county's share of transient accommodations tax moneys was a "political ploy" and that he supported the counties keeping this money. But what is the cost of his plan? Siphoning needed visitor industry marketing dollars for other uses would be acceptable. While he cited the importance of "restoring public confidence in government," we are not seeing it. The "new day" feels like politics as usual.

The chamber supports the team of Duke Aiona/Lynn Finnegan for governor/lieutenant governor because they, eyes wide open, are ready to change the status quo; make our economic recovery a priority; oppose tax increases; reduce burdens on businesses; audit the DOE to fix deeply rooted challenges; improve systems, and move ahead with a plan and budget we can afford. They are the team with the "real solutions" for the people and businesses of Hawaii. Please vote them into office Tuesday.

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

## Employment costs show modest third quarter rise

WASHINGTON (AP) — Employment costs posted another modest gain in the July-to-September quarter with compensation for state and local government employees turning in the weakest performance in nearly three decades.

Employment costs for civilian workers rose 0.4 percent in the third quarter and are up just 1.9 percent for the 12 months ending in September, the Labor Department reported Friday. High unemployment following a deep recession continues to depress workers' bargaining power.

State and local government workers, who have been battered by shrinking budgets, fared even worse than employees of private industry. Their compensation was flat in the third quarter and up only 1.7 percent in the past 12 months.

Both were the weakest showings on records that go back 28 years.

The 1.9 percent 12-month rise in compensation for all civilian workers was little changed from a 1.8 percent increase for the 12 months ending in June. Those gains are significantly below the 3.3 percent increase for the 12 months ending in December 2007, the month the recession began.

With more than 8 million jobs lost from December 2007 to December of last year, employees have not had the bargaining power to demand higher wages.

For the third quarter, wages and salaries for civilian workers rose 0.4 percent, matching the second quarter increase, while benefits were up 0.5 percent, also the same as the April-to-June quarter.

Wages and salaries make up 70 percent of employee compensation while benefits, which include health insurance and pensions, make up the other 30 percent.

For state and local workers, the flat reading on total compensation in the third quarter reflected a 0.3 percent drop in wages and salaries and a 0.7 percent rise in benefits.