

CONGRESSMAN ED CASE

Hawai'i • District 1



Aloha!

Let me first extend my best wishes to all members of our Neighborhood Boards as well as all those who join your meetings as we welcome the New Year with these words from former law professor Michael Josephson: "Approach the New

Year with resolve to find opportunities hidden in each new day."

This is my first quarterly report to you in 2020, and first I am relieved to say that, unlike last year at this time, our federal government is open for business. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I worked with my colleagues both in the House and in the Senate to make sure we continued to fund the government programs and services we all have come to depend on and that you are entitled to from 2019 into 2020.

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A look back at 2019 and forward to 2020



2019 Year in Review



"Talk Story" at Washington Middle School

Last year opened and closed in dramatic fashion, as we entered 2019 in the midst of what would turn out to be the longest shutdown of our federal government, and bid Aloha to year only after a historic vote in the U.S. House to impeach the President. Throughout the year, I placed a priority in staying in contact with you, whether through in-person sessions like my 17 "Talk Stories", my staff appearing at Neighborhood Boards, my "Congressman Ed Case Reports to Hawaii" monthly videos on 'Ōlelo's Public Access Channel television, or through my printed mailers to your home or electronic newsletters sent to your email. By listening to your views and concerns, we were able to accomplish much for our Hawai'i. As we enter the second half of the 116th Congress, you have my commitment to continue to work with you and others who want to make our Hawai'i an even better place to live, work and raise our families.

Just before 2019 ended, I introduced two pieces of legislation of vital interest to our Hawai'i. One addresses protecting our fragile environment, while the other takes on what I believe is a major factor driving up the cost of living in our state.

Taking on the high cost of living in Hawai'i

I introduced three bills in Congress to reform the century-old Merchant Marine Act of 1920 (commonly referred to as the "Jones Act"), which is widely credited with artificially inflating the cost of shipping goods to Hawai'i. The Jones Act mandates that all cargo shipping between U.S. ports occur exclusively on U.S., not foreign, flagged vessels. Additionally, the law requires that these vessels are built in the U.S. and owned and crewed by U.S. citizens. Because Jones Act shipping has shrunken and international shipping has increased dramatically, especially in the last quarter-century, the Jones Act results in a very few carriers serving all domestic shipping needs.

My three bills aim directly at one of the key drivers of our astronomically high cost of living in Hawai'i and other locations in our country that are not part of the continental U.S. Because the Jones Act severely limits the supply of shipping to and from our communities, it has allowed a very few companies to control our very lifeline to the outside world and as a result command shipping rates way higher than the rest of the world.

In the rest of our country, if shipping rates are too high then there are transportation alternatives like trucking and rail that act as a market check on the shipping companies. But that is not a choice in our noncontiguous jurisdictions, and if there are artificially limited numbers of shippers then the price of virtually everything we need is jacked up.

Take Hawai'i as a classic example. Located almost 2,500 miles from the West Coast, our state imports well over 90 percent of its life necessities, including food and other consumer goods, construction and housing supplies, and raw materials for Hawai'i industries like agriculture, by ocean cargo only. At a basic level, the everyday goods that we rely on in Hawai'i cost much more than on the Mainland; just compare the price of any good in California stores against ours for the evidence.

There are plenty of international cargo lines who could and would compete for a share of that market. Yet in Hawaii's case only two U.S. flag domestic cargo lines - Matson and Pasha - operate a virtual duopoly over our lifeline and they do not act as an effective market check on each other. My bills would open up our hostage shipping lanes to competition and directly affect the cost of shipping which would in turn reduce our astronomical cost of living.

Defending against pests and disease

I introduced a bill to require that all baggage and cargo transporting into the State of Hawai'i by air or sea be inspected for invasive species and high-risk agricultural materials. My colleague, Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard (HI-02), co-introduced my measure, entitled the Hawai'i Invasive Species Protection Act .

We must act now because invasive species pose an especially grave and accelerating threat to Hawai'i. Isolated Hawai'i has one of the highest numbers and rate of endemic species anywhere and invasive species have wreaked havoc on our natural environment.

This measure would simply require the same inspection protocol for goods coming to Hawai'i that is currently imposed when leaving the islands. This is the protocol that is followed by leading invasive prevention countries overseas – and if it's good for the rest of the country and world, it's good for Hawai'i.

The cost of inspections would be paid for from increases in the current agriculture quarantine inspection fee. This is not just an environmental issue but an economic one. Hawai'i's unique circumstances also have given rise to one of our nation's most diverse and productive agricultural communities. With a year-round growing cycle, our crops have ranged throughout our history from the highest quality sugar and pineapple and cattle to tropical specialty crops like fruit and cut flowers in the highest demand worldwide. Yet it is exactly because these crops like our natural resources have adapted to Hawai'i's uniqueness that they are the most susceptible to devastation from external species against which they have no natural defenses. Invasive species have drastically impacted agriculture in Hawai'i, threatening some of the island's most valuable crops in the state's third-largest industry.

Yet despite these incontrovertible and growing impacts of external species on Hawai'i's natural resources and economy, existing federal law leaves Hawaii largely defenseless against increasingly destructive invasives. Imports by air and sea, the only means of in-bound transportation to our island state, lack any effective regulation to screen out invasives.

More tragedy on tour helicopters and small aircraft

As I reported to all Neighborhood Boards on December 24th, nineteen Boards have now passed resolutions joining our Honolulu City Council and many other residents and groups statewide in expressing deep and crowing concerns with the worsening safety and community disruption of tour helicopters and small aircraft. Just a few days later, yet another tragedy again placed a spotlight on the lack of regulation and enforcement over the tour helicopter and small commercial aircraft industry. The accident that claimed the lives of seven people on Kaua'i in late December underscores the urgency to get both the regulators (especially the Federal Aviation Administration) and lawmakers on the federal, state and local levels to focus on the dangers these aircraft pose to passengers and crew in the air, as well as to people and property on the ground. I will continue to pursue my "Safe and Quiet Skies" Act to deal with the safety risks and disruptions that tour helicopters and small aircraft increasingly pose to our many of our neighborhoods across our state, as well as to our national parks, cemeteries including the Arizona Memorial, and even to operations at our main port of entry for most of our food and other goods, Honolulu Harbor.

Cleaning beaches is the winning App

In December, I announced the winners of my first annual Congressional App Challenge for Hawaii's First Congressional District. The Challenge is a great opportunity for our local students to focus their skills and creativity on developing, testing and analyzing new applications for real-world use. The results of my first Challenge prove that they have the skill set, imagination and resolve to compete against the best of our young people nationwide in science, technology, engineering and math, along with the potential to lead the next generations of computer science and technology.

The winners and where you can see their app online include:

1st Place: **Arjun Sharma**

School: Laurel Springs Online School (Honolulu)

Grade: 11

App: CleanMyBeach

Video: <https://vimeo.com/370428571>

2nd Place: **Harvey Lloyd Picar, Jett Palacpac, and Kristine Orpilla**

School: Waipahu High School

Grade: 11

App: WHS Sports

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6LECisTy3I>

3rd Place: **Destiny Shishido, Reyan Lee, and Kalani Agustin**

School: Waipahu High School

Grade: 11

App: WHS Tools

Video: <https://youtu.be/u8mSTVgVnVg>

The Congressional App Challenge is an official national initiative of the U.S. House of Representatives, in which Members of Congress host contests in their districts for middle and high school students, and the winner is invited to showcase the winning application at the United States Capitol and on the U.S. House website. The Challenge encourages students to learn code and inspires them to pursue careers in computer science. An application is a type of software that allows a person to perform specific tasks. Applications for desktop or laptop computers are sometimes called desktop applications, while those for mobile devices are called mobile apps.

Answering your Questions and Serving Your Needs

In addition to these and many more activities, my staff and I are busy meeting with folks and groups throughout our district and in DC to better understand how we can help, plus reviewing and answering thousands of communications, assisting many constituents with your individual concerns ranging from immigration and Social Security, Medicare and veterans benefits, and hosting and arranging tours for visitors from home in our nation's capital. We very much look forward to hearing from you on anything we might be able to assist you with both here in our island home and in DC.

Please continue to tune in to my regular program on 'Ōlelo community broadcasting for updates. My "Congressman Case Reports to Hawai'i" show has a regular primetime slot on

‘Ōlelo ch.49 every third Sunday at 6 PM and again the following Tuesday at 10AM. There is a new show every month on what I'm up to and the issues I'm facing in DC and back home. Each show is also on my YouTube channel at youtube.com/RepEdCase

Finally, please also visit my web site at <https://case.house.gov> and my social media accounts on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Youtube, which can be found on the top-right corner of my official website. Through these sites, I work to keep you up to date with what I've been doing.

I truly appreciate the opportunity to update you on my activities as your Congressman and to serve you and our Hawai'i in Congress.

*Mahalo nui loa,
Ed Case*