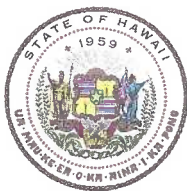


SENATOR MIKE GABBARD  
20TH DISTRICT

KAPOLEI, MAKAKILO,  
AND PORTIONS OF EWA, KALAELOA  
& WAIPAHU



**The Senate**

STATE CAPITOL  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

CHAIRMAN  
WATER, LAND & AGRICULTURE  
VICE CHAIR  
TRANSPORTATION & ENERGY

MEMBER  
JUDICIARY & LABOR  
HIGHER EDUCATION & THE ARTS

**Written Testimony for U.S. Senate Committee on Energy  
and Natural Resources Field Hearing  
October 18, 2016**

Aloha and mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on opportunities for federal and non-federal partnerships in integrated water management and efforts to improve water security in Hawai'i. I commend the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for seeking this input and looking for ways to collaborate to help our state improve its stewardship of this precious natural resource. As the Chair of the State Senate's Water, Land, and Agriculture Committee, I can assure you that this topic will continue to be a top priority in my policymaking efforts.

Our state had an incredible privilege last month to host the World Conservation Congress for the first time in our nation's history. This event, which included over 10,100 delegates from 192 countries from around the world, proved to be a perfect opportunity to showcase our leadership in sustainability through our Aloha + Challenge targets and to forge partnerships for future efforts. During his Opening Address at the Congress, Governor Ige announced our state's commitment to protecting 30% of our watersheds by 2030.

The Hawai'i Fresh Water Initiative has become a cornerstone of our state's efforts to improve integrated water management and water security in the state. Through this collaborative effort led by the Hawai'i Community Foundation, three aggressive water strategy areas have been identified: conservation, recharge, and reuse. The principal goal of the Initiative is to create 100 million gallons per day in additional, reliable fresh water capacity for our islands by 2030, including recharging our aquifers through rainwater capture with a goal of 30 million gallons a day. Achieving these ambitious goals is directly tied to the successful stewardship of our watershed areas.

The State Legislature has taken the need to focus on fresh water security to heart. On June 30<sup>th</sup>, I participated in a bill signing ceremony for 7 water supply related bills.

This is the most water-related bills in memory—and the direct result of a close partnership between the Water and Land Committee in the House and our committee in the Senate. The issue will remain at the forefront in coming sessions. A few of the highlights include:

- **Act 169 (SB 2645)** provides funding for and requires the adoption of a 5-year statewide water loss audit program to encourage our water utilities to track leaks and prevent water waste.
- **Act 170 (HB 1749)** amends the Hawai'i state water plan to include the utilization of reclaimed water at all state and county facilities for all uses other than potable/drinking water needs. The new law sets an ambitious goal for the water sector just as Hawai'i has adopted a nation-leading standard around 100% renewable energy.
- **Act 172 (HB 2040)** establishes a 2-year Natural Capital Investment Partnership under the state Department of Land Natural Resources to spur water innovation and public-private partnerships in the water sector.

As we look to our future priorities, it's important that the state and federal government provide sufficient financial resources to enable our Watershed Partnerships and the state Department of Land and Natural Resources to protect more of our watershed forests. We should also continue to encourage the EPA and state Department of Health to work together to find good uses for the funding available through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. Going beyond state and county buildings, we need to update our plumbing and building codes to include the latest efficiency and reuse potential and conserve our water resources. The State Legislature will also revisit legislation to create a program that offers incentives to local residents who invest in water conservation systems.

This field hearing is a welcome addition to the dialogue about how Hawai'i can begin to lead in creating holistic, integrated solutions to our water challenges. With the impacts of climate change already altering our reality in the Islands, the Legislature will continue to take water seriously, and push aggressively to ensure that every drop of water that hits our islands is efficiently captured, distributed, and reused where possible. I'm grateful that the federal government continues to be a key partner in this effort.