

A Grass Roots Call To Action

Those who govern are there to serve those who are governed. But now a power elite in the State and County governments has forgotten that simple precept. A partnership exists between commercial interests and political leaders, a partnership that seeks to systematically disassemble the legal framework designed to give each community a voice and to prevent culturally and environmentally unsound exploitation of the land and communities of Hawaii. The purpose appears to be to reduce roadblocks to commercial use.

A series of actions has disenfranchised local communities' ability to determine their own future:

- Passing Act 55, establishing the Public Land Development Corporation. This entity has unprecedented powers to enter agreements and to guarantee risk of commercial interests that will develop state, conservation, and ceded lands.
- Passing Act 97, doing away with geothermal subzones and taking away the counties' power to regulate geothermal power. One notable effect of removing sub-zones was to remove the community's input to evaluating possible social and environmental effects of the plant. If the legislature had done away with regulations governing location and local control of pig farms in a similar fashion, every community would be in an uproar.
- Passing Senate Resolution 25, urging the Bureau of Land and Natural Resources and the Public Land Development Corporation to use of Acts 55 and 97 to commercially exploit the land for geothermal.
- Initiating an administrative action, which was narrowly defeated, to do away with environmental impact statements or environmental assessments for geothermal exploratory drilling. This initiative was taken when Bill 755, designed to do the same thing, attracted some early community-group opposition.

The actions above represent a coordinated, thought-out attack on the powers of community. Additionally, this is but one example of several attacks on community self-determination throughout Hawai'i. Grassroots organizations are standing up against Big Wind in Moloka'i and Lanai; resorts and transportation in O'ahu and Kaua'i; fencing of hunting areas and the slaughtering of game animals on the Big Island; laying the inter-island power cable, planting fields of GMO crops, or ignoring Hawaiian cultural issues throughout the islands.

All these groups have one thing in common—the strong desire to protect our homes, families and Aina from changes that threaten our hoped for way of life.

It has become very clear that the issue is not just how geothermal or other projects are developed, but more importantly, the taking away of the people's opportunity for input and the role of the local County and the State government in determining people's lifestyles and environment. These issues are at the very heart of the relationship of the people and their government.

In response to this challenge to community self-determination, Puna Pono is working throughout the state with other local grassroots organizations and concerned citizens, pushing for outright repeal of Acts 55 and 97. We intend to guard jealously against further encroachment in this year's legislature.

If you wish to stay informed about community action and receive the Puna Pono Alliance Newsletter and Bob Petricci's Updates, email newsletter@punapono.com with NEWSLETTER in the subject line.

Puna Pono Alliance needs funds to keep up the fight for Puna. Please contribute by credit card or PayPal at punapono.com/contribute or by check to PO Box 492668, Keaau, HI 96749.

If you want to help in other ways please call (808) 339-4344.

We sometimes ask for people to come out and support us with testimony, especially when important legislation is being passed. This can be done in person or by email. If you have never given testimony but would like to, we can guide you in this process. It is an empowering thing to do and an action that is of immense value when it comes to passing legislation. When the people speak en masse, the politicians listen.