



# Senator Gil Riviere

## Proudly Serving Ka'ena to Kāne'ohe



Aloha!

The 2017 legislative session was unusual. Most sessions have one or two explosive issues that bring out passionate discourse, and we had a couple tough issues, but this year was different.

Everyone thought some form of additional rail tax would pass. I am one of the vocal opponents of more rail taxes, but I did not think it could be stopped. Equally surprising were the removal of the Speaker of the House and Senate Ways and Means Chair in the final days of session.

This year, I served as Vice-Chair of the Agriculture and Energy Committee, and was a member of the Ways and Means Committee and Education Committee.

Here is my annual report from the Capitol and from within our spectacular District 23.

### 2017 Legislative Wrap Up

The debate over rail financing overshadowed nearly every other issue this year. The twists, turns and diversity of solutions proposed and debated were astonishing. From start to finish, 13 versions of SB 1183 were put forward for consideration. Deliberations during Conference Committee were remarkably pointed and the legislation collapsed on the floors of the House and Senate when different amendments were passed in the final days. See Page 3 for a summary of changes to SB 1183.

Not quite lost in the roar of the rail debate was SB 1129, a measure to allow assisted suicide, or death with dignity, depending on one's point of view. This bill passed the Senate 22-3, but stalled in the House Committee on Health where legislators wanted additional safeguards.

I considered the bill long and hard, drifting back and forth in support and opposition. Ultimately, I voted against SB 1129 after a compelling conversation with a friend who is an oncology nurse and a nursing professor at UH. Her insights into cancer treatment, care, and occasional cures, along with the inspirational story of my friend, Senator Breene Harimoto, who survived pancreatic cancer, helped inform my decision.

The teachers' union had a novel idea to fund pay raises and bring additional resources to the Department of Education. They wanted to create a new, statewide property tax on investment properties and dedicate the funds to education. While I support increasing teacher pay, this idea is bad policy because no source of funds is safe from redirection and it would have trampled the counties' authority to pay for all their obligations. The bill died in Conference Committee; however, the union successfully negotiated a healthy pay raise this year.



Senator Riviere with family & friends on Opening Day

For the second year in a row, Airbnb sought authority to collect taxes from its vacation rental bookings and pass them on the state. The bill failed to pass because conference negotiators could not agree on protections against proliferation of illegal rentals.

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# O'ahu Country News

with Senator Gil Riviere

- [Episode 1: Junior Lifeguards with Bryan Phillips](#)
- [Episode 2: Koolaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club with Mahealani Cypher & Rocky Kaluhiwa](#)
- [Episode 3: Oceanfest with Dotty Kelly-Paddock & PJ Ollien](#)
- [Episode 4: Maunawila Heiau with Christina Aiu & Rebekah Matagi](#)
- [Episode 5: North Shore Community Land Trust with Doug Cole](#)
- [Episode 6: Paepae o Heeia with Hi'ilei Kawelo](#)
- [Episode 7: Kualoa Ranch with Taylor Kellerman](#)
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- [Episode 9: Waimea Valley with Richard Pezzulo](#)
- [Episode 10: Kalei Kaho'okele](#)
- [Episode 11: Kahiau with Kori Napa'a](#)
- [Episode 12: Hoola Na Pua with Jessica Munoz and Jody Allione](#)
- [Episode 13: Kunia Village with Dave Robichaux](#)
- [Episode 14: Blue Zones Project—Koolaupoko with Cherie Andrade](#)
- [Episode 15: Rep. Sean Quinlan](#)
- [Episode 16: Surfrider with Rafael Bergstrom](#)

Watch these programs, read the Senator's North Shore News articles and find links to other news stories at [SenatorRiviere.com/news-media](http://SenatorRiviere.com/news-media)



2017 Hawai'i State Senate

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The people of Hawaii missed out on a great candidate for Public Utilities Commissioner when Tom Gorak's nomination was rejected in a very politicized vote of 15 against and 10 in support.

Hawaii Tourism Authority has a large budget relative to the Department of Land and Natural Resources, the agency responsible for managing the natural beauty and public lands of Hawaii. It is time for HTA to begin supporting our State Parks, which are being inundated by more and more visitors.

I introduced SB 703, a bill that would redirect an increasing amount of HTA's budget to State Parks, in proportion to visitor arrivals exceeding nine million per year. Although this measure did not pass, it brought much needed attention to the funding shortage at Parks, protected the department's base funding, and sets the stage for more discussion on the increasing impacts of tourism on our state lands.

Unfortunately, three other bills I introduced, SB 700, to increase penalties for cruelty to indigenous birds, SB 698, to improve enforcement against illegal dwellings and structures on agricultural lands, and SB 1229, a ministerial correction to improve environmental court work flow, stalled in the House.

Sometimes even the best, non-controversial ideas take more than one year to pass. I will push to get these measures restarted next year from where we left off.

Stretching from Kaena to Kaneohe to Poamoho and Kunia Camp, our district is nothing short of spectacular. From the mountains to our bays, beaches, forest reserves, agricultural lands, and in our small rural communities, we have much to cherish and appreciate. It is my pleasure to serve the people of this district and I encourage anyone who has thoughts about state laws and policies, suggestions to make our district even better, or questions about any issue, to reach out to me.

**SB 1183 – The Rail Tax**

The initial version would have made the 0.5% GET surcharge permanent. The first Senate committee added several new parts, each containing variations on the tax and permitted purposes, such as education, transportation and development projects. The next committee removed all the new tax options, and eliminated the state’s 10 percent skim of the county surcharge, which would render about \$30 million per year in additional rail funds. This was the Senate position.

In the House, the first committee inserted a provision to extend the GET surcharge for an undetermined time, changed the skim repeal to an undetermined amount, and directed some revenue for other highway projects. The next committee set the GET extension for two years, to 2029, prohibited use of funds for anything other than construction, and reduced the skim to one percent. This was the House position.

In conference, the Senate chair pushed for a 10 year extension of the GET surcharge; however, the House chair countered with a 10 year Transient Accommodation Tax rate increase, reduction of Honolulu’s TAT allotment by \$13 million, creation of a new education fund, prohibition of using public funds to redevelop Blaisdell Center, deletion of any GET surcharge extension and other restrictions on the funds. The latter became the Conference Committee position.

Instead of Final passage, the Senate amended the bill to extend the GET surcharge for 10 years and delete all other provisions, while the House amended the bill to extend the GET surcharge for one year, reducing the TAT increase from 2.75% to 1.0%, and reducing the \$50 million education fund withholding to \$25 million.

Because each house ended up with different versions, the bill did not pass.

**New Kupuna Caregivers Program**

A new Kupuna Caregivers Program was authorized by HB 607. This new program may assist qualified home care providers with up to \$70 a day to pay for qualified costs of caring for their loved ones. This small allowance could make a huge difference by allowing care givers to hire temporary assistance and ease their continuous burden.

Adult day care and kupuna services are extremely limited in our district. We welcome your thoughts on this subject.

***Get Prepared / Stay Prepared***

Hurricane season in Hawaii is June through November. Tsunamis, earthquakes and other disasters strike any-time, without warning. Everyone should maintain an up to date 14-day emergency supply kit and prepare a disaster preparedness plan.

Download the free app, Ready Hawaii, for extensive planning information.

**Emergency Notifications**

Honolulu's Dept. of Emergency Management offers a free app called HNL.Info to alert residents in real time about tsunami, hurricane, flood and road closure warnings.

**Emergency Resources**

Police, Fire, Ambulance Dial 911  
Hurricane Center: [prh.noaa.gov/cphc/](http://prh.noaa.gov/cphc/)  
Tsunami Warning: [ptwc.weather.gov](http://ptwc.weather.gov)

**City Emergency Management**

OahuDEM.org 723-8960

**State Civil Defense**

SCD.Hawaii.Gov 733-4300  
HECO Service Center 548-7961  
Board of Water 527.5200

**See SenatorRiviere.com for useful links.**



***Comment / Response Form — We would love to hear from you!***

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City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please share your thoughts, suggestions, or concerns:

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# 2017 Investment in our Community

Here is a list of Capitol Improvements Projects and Grants in Aid included in this year's budget to support worthy projects and organizations in our district.

## Grants in Aid

ALEA Bridge	\$ 1,000,000	Homeless services in Wahiawa - Waialua	Plans, land acquisition, design, and construction for a resource and navigation center
Bobby Benson Center	\$ 250,000	Residential treatment program for adolescent substance abuse	Plans, design, construction, and equipment for renovation and restoration of facility
Ho'ola Na Pua	\$ 500,000	Assistance for teenage girls who have been sex trafficked in Hawaii and US	Construction and equipment for the renovation of a licensed special treatment facility
Koolauloa Health/Wellness	\$ 200,000	Providing medical services to the Koolauloa area	Plans, land acquisition, and design for a health center facility.
Kunia Village	\$ 665,000	Affordable housing development serving persons in the agricultural industry	Plans, design, construction, and equipment for capital improvements to water systems .

## Capital Improvement Projects

Kahuku State Ag. Park	\$ 350,000	Improvements
Kahuku High & Intermediate School	\$ 1,000,000	Drainage Improvements/Flood Mitigation
Sunset Beach Elementary	\$ 300,000	Stairs/Ramp to Park
Kahaluu Elementary	\$ 900,000	Electrical Upgrades/Site Improvements
Agricultural Lands	\$ 23,752,000	Purchase 646.695 acres from Dole Food Corp.
Waiahole Irrigation System	\$ 4,000,000	Water System Improvements
State Parks	\$ 3,000,000	Infrastructure/Facility Improvements