

Hawaii

# Senate Takes No Action On Water Rights Bill

Leaders say House Bill 1326 is dead for certain in the 2019 session, which wraps Thursday.



By Chad Blair    / April 30, 2019

 Reading time: 2 minutes.



The Hawaii Senate on Tuesday did not act on [House Bill 1326](#), known as the water rights bill.

It would have extended for seven years the diversion of state waters by Alexander & Baldwin, utilities, landowners, small farmers and ranchers.

Asked why HB 1326 did not come to the floor for a vote, Senate President Ron Kouchi said, “Because it didn’t come to the floor.”

Is the bill dead for this year?

“Yes,” he said, adding that he is worried about farmers affected by the bill’s failure to pass, including those on his island, Kauai.

Kouchi said the issue of revocable permits must now be addressed by the state Department of Land and Natural Resources.



The 2019 Hawaii Legislature ends its session Thursday.

Senate Majority Leader J. Kalani English, whose district includes East Maui where streams have long been diverted, said SB 1326 did not have the votes needed to pass.

English said he would have voted no on the bill anyway, as he did when the Legislature approved extending the permits for three years in 2016.

“With the issue of the water flowing, we need to come to closure on this, and my position has always been ‘no’ on this because it effects my district

directly, but also the other side of my district, Kula and Upcountry,” he said.

English’s constituents have long been divided on the water rights matter.

He continued: “I’ve got 35,000 people that rely on this for domestic water. And they don’t understand that the county is buying the water because it goes through the East Maui Irrigation system to the county. And the contract with the county says that if they don’t get their permits, they don’t need to deliver the water.”

English said he has always relied on the DLNR to put longterm water permits in place.

“They have failed at that, and they have not been able to fulfill that so, at this point, come Dec. 31 or Jan 1., as it stands today, water will stop flowing,” he said.

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