

February 12, 2010

The Honorable Calvin K.Y. Say
Speaker of the House of Representatives
The Twenty-Fifth Legislature
State of Hawaii
State Capitol, Room 431
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Mr. Speaker:

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly Board of Directors condemn the manner by which the House failed to vote on the issue of same-sex civil unions on Friday, January 29 and, just as importantly, the failure to pass a crucial civil rights measure. Your having succumbed to fears about offending those who preach intolerance represents a grievous failure to do the job for which you were elected: to be accountable to people in Hawaii and ensure that the civil rights of minorities are protected. The use of a closed meeting to frustrate transparency in decision making is an affront to the democratic process and weakens the institution you were sworn to protect.

As University professors, we have a responsibility to speak our minds and debate all issues with each other and with our students. We expect exactly the same from you! Furthermore, if you as elected leaders can be intimidated into silence on a matter of civil rights for all, how long will it be before others also find themselves subject to similar constraints? For reasons of free speech, and open and honest debate, the House of Representatives must take a public vote on the issue of same-sex civil unions. The House must also reestablish the basic tenets of openness and transparency in any decision making, regardless of the topic. There are more of us who believe in free speech than there are those who would do you harm if you exercise yours. As elected officials representing all the voters of the State, you owe the people of Hawaii your transparent vote and voices on issues, even when they are controversial.

We urge you to take a stand, bring this issue to a vote, and, most importantly, pass HB 444. It's the right thing to do.

You will have our support and the support of thousands of Hawaii voters.

Sincerely,

UHPA Board of Directors

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