



For Immediate Release: March 14, 2016

HTA Release (16-13)

Statement by George D. Szigeti, President and CEO, Hawaii Tourism Authority
RE: HTA Opposes Legislation to Reduce Its Budget

HONOLULU – George D. Szigeti, president and CEO of the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA), the state's tourism agency, issued the following statement addressing HTA's opposition to legislation that would compromise its support of Hawaii's most important industry.

"The HTA stands in opposition to any legislation being considered that reduces our budget or weakens our capability to market tourism for the Hawaiian Islands.

"Tourism is Hawaii's most important industry, being the State's economic driver and largest provider of jobs for families statewide. Hawaii's tourism industry has been successful in recent years, but continued success depends on Hawaii being able to compete against global destinations, many of which have far greater funds available for tourism marketing.

"Enactment of legislation to reduce HTA's budget will force us to scale back on our tourism marketing for the Hawaiian Islands, and reduce our funding support of local nonprofits that provide programs perpetuating Hawaii's culture, natural resources, festivals, and community spirit.

"This Wednesday, at 10:00 a.m., a state house committee will hear testimony on SB83, a state senate bill to reallocate \$3 million of HTA's budget to subsidize travel expenses incurred by University of Hawaii sports teams.

"HTA opposes SB83, insofar as it seeks to redirect HTA's tourism industry funding to support basic operating expenses of the University of Hawaii. We believe funding to support travel by University of Hawaii student-athletes should come from sources other than HTA's budget.

"On Wednesday, HTA will also be providing comments to a state senate committee on two state house bills regarding sports marketing in Hawaii. We understand the intent of HB1847 to create and fund a sports and entertainment authority, which would be a new state agency, as well as HB2229, which proposes to create and fund a sports task force for the State.

"Sports marketing for the Hawaiian Islands is handled by HTA to help showcase Hawaii's brand as a destination. This year HTA has committed \$9 million in funds to support 19 sports events in Hawaii with a projected economic impact of \$144 million. We are also evaluating several proposals to support other sports events in Hawaii.

"It is important to remember that HTA is not requesting additional funding support from the legislature. Any reduction in HTA's budget will have a negative impact on our funding of tourism marketing and support of community programs."

About HTA

The [Hawai'i Tourism Authority](#) (HTA) is responsible for strategically managing the State of Hawai'i's marketing initiatives to support tourism. HTA's goal is to optimize tourism's benefits for Hawai'i, while being attentive to the interests of travelers, the community and visitor industry. Established in 1998 to support Hawai'i's leading industry and largest employer, HTA continually strives to help ensure the sustainability of tourism's success.

For more information about HTA, please visit www.hawaiiauthority.org. Follow updates about HTA on Facebook, Twitter (@HawaiiHTA) and its YouTube Channel.

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