

Letters to the Editor

How to write us

The Star-Advertiser welcomes letters that are crisp and to the point (~150 words). The Star-Advertiser reserves the right to edit letters for clarity and length. Please direct comments to the issues; personal attacks will not be published. Letters must be signed and include your area of residence and daytime telephone number.

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For Friday, April 22, 2011

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Don't use AGI for pension tax

Thanks to Barbara Kim Stanton for reminding seniors that the pension tax is not dead ("Pension tax fight is not over yet," Letters, Star-Advertiser, April 19).

The full Senate wisely decided to remove the taxing-of-pensions provision entirely in House Bill 1092 after the attorney general said it may be unconstitutional and subject to lawsuits.

It is important to note that Senate Bill 570 had no mention of a pension tax when it left the Senate. The House Finance Committee added the pension tax and it is now heading to conference committee.

This bill is grossly unfair in determining who will be taxed on their pensions and who will not.

If pensions absolutely must be taxed, it should be based on the amount of the pension that exceeds a certain threshold, not the AGI. This would exempt those with lower level incomes and spread the sacrifice equally.

Jo Ann Kocher
Honolulu

It's politics as usual at City Hall

Mayor Peter Carlisle says, "Steps are being taken to remove the specter of politics from Honolulu Hale. Changing a culture as complex as the city and the culture that supports it takes time ("Next year's mayoral race could be re-run of last year's," On Politics, Star-Advertiser, April 19)."

Turns out it doesn't take any time at all because it's not happening.

Our mayor has named a bank CEO, former director of construction trades, and the city corporation counsel to the newly formed transit board. City Council Chairman Nestor Garcia named an attorney and former director of Honolulu budget and fiscal services, a property development manager, and the manager for the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

This is change? Where is the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, the Sierra Club, the Outdoor Circle or credible, objective outsiders? Maybe someone who's actually done this before?

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Pat Kelly
Honolulu

Legislative focus must be on cuts

The Building Industry Association of Hawaii is a beneficiary of the nonprofit general excise tax exemption as it is a 501(c), 6, trade organization.

While we continue to look for ways to streamline our operations and provide our members with representation in these types of public policy debates, we cannot help but wonder why so much attention is being focused on the revenue side of the books rather than on severely restricting government spending.

We are not tea party advocates promoting a dismantling of government services. We are, however, strong advocates of using the economic downturn as an opportunity to right-size government.

There are essential public education, health and safety programs that government should fund. All other programs should be abolished, restricted for a period of time or supported with non-tax revenues such as user fees.

Most businesses would focus on their core functions and restrict or eliminate non-core activities.

This would be a more responsible way to balance the state's budget, rather than squeezing nonprofits through the elimination of their GET exemption.

Karen T. Nakamura

Executive vice president and chief executive officer,
BIA-Hawaii

Politicians need to bite bullet, too

Maui Mayor Alan Arakawa is reducing the number of people in his jurisdiction, and state Sen. Sam Slom has recommended the same for state employees.

to the legislators?

Ronald Wong
Honolulu

Shelters could use volunteers

Bravo for Jay Fidell's column ("Economic recovery relies on supporting homeless," Think Tech, Star-Advertiser, April 12). It was a well-written and honest piece about homelessness in our state.

We encourage people who want to make a difference to please partner up with an established social services agency. We've seen dozens of groups feeding people out in the parks and on the beaches. We recognize that this is done with the best of intentions, but unless they're coordinated with some type of outreach or social services, in many cases they're enabling the homeless and encouraging them to stay put.

Please humbly consider this fact and perhaps entertain the idea of volunteering at a shelter or one of the many soup kitchens that provide hot meals to the homeless every day. We need your help.

Connie Mitchell

Executive director, Institute for Human Services

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