



PRESS RELEASE

Date: 4/24/08, for immediate release

Pages: 1

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HB2843 could prevent snakes on a plane

Last week's snake sighting at Marine Corps Base Hawai'i (MCBH) could become the norm in Hawai'i if HB 2843 is not passed. HB 2843 would allow the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) to charge 50 cents per ton of incoming domestic cargo, which would be used to support the local inspection of incoming goods for invasive species. The snake sighting happened to coincide with the annual Brown Treesnake Working Group Meeting, where the military buildup on Guam was being discussed.

Construction projects associated with the military buildup on Guam have already begun. There will be a 600% associated increase in movement of military personnel, civilians, cargo, planes and ships, and Hawai'i will receive much of this traffic from Guam. The current facilities and staffing in Hawai'i is inadequate to ensure that all incoming cargo, ships and planes are inspected for brown treesnakes.

HDOA has been trying to prepare for increased traffic from Guam and has formulated a Biosecurity Plan which includes instituting a cargo inspection fee on all incoming domestic cargo to ensure adequate funding for this important program. Until last year, most inspection and quarantine services were funded by General funds, and have not been commensurate with the amount of work to be done. Last year, the legislature passed a bill that would allow HDOA to charge \$1 on all incoming 20ft. sea containers, but it did not include air cargo or non-containerized cargo. Air cargo and flights pose a huge risk of carrying invasive species including brown treesnakes and other pests. With the military buildup on Guam and the ongoing influx of pests, Hawai'i must fix this funding gap now.

HB 2843 HD2, SD2 is currently in conference committee, which will reconvene on Friday 4/25 at 1 p.m. http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2008/hearingnotices/CONF_04-25-08_AGR_RECONVENE_.htm The airlines are in opposition to collecting the fee of 50-cents per ton of cargo for inspection purposes.

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