



WAIKIKI NEIGHBORHOOD BOARD NO. 9

c/o NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION • 530 SOUTH KING STREET ROOM 406 • HONOLULU, HAWAII, 96813
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May 12, 2008

Chair Kobayashi and Members of the Executive Matters Committee,

At the meeting on January, 8, 2008 Meeting of the Waikiki Neighborhood Board the majority of members voted to oppose Resolution 07- 379 which relates to term limits for Neighborhood Board members.

If the basic philosophy behind term limits is that “power corrupts and that elected officials need to be restrained, lest they become too entrenched, the first point that needs to be emphasized in terms of differentiating the Neighborhood Boards from other elected officials is that the Neighborhood Boards have NO POWER. They are ADVISORY only and serve merely as a sounding board for community concerns which can then be relayed to appropriate officials. For that reason, the basic rationale for term limits has no applicability to Neighborhood Boards. It would make no more sense to establish a rule that no citizen could serve on a Task Force or be a member of a community organization for a period in excess of ten years.

The other major difference between the Neighborhood Boards and other elected office holders is that the Neighborhood Boards are composed of volunteer citizens who meet merely once per month and are uncompensated. Perhaps at the level of a Mayor or Governor or the City Council where members serve in a full time capacity, and receive large amounts of campaign contributions and make major decisions affecting the lives of average citizens, there may be a legitimate basis for term limits. It is noteworthy of course that even at the state legislature, there are no term limits for State Senators or State Representatives. In any event, those factors are not present and it makes no sense whatsoever to impose term limits on the members of Neighborhood Boards.

The other consideration is that there is often a shortage of well qualified community residents who even express interest in serving on the Neighborhood Boards . Some Boards are so shorthanded that they literally are unable to fill their allotted seats and may not even have a quorum to conduct business. Surely this proposal would negatively impact some Boards. Speaking for Waikiki, we have several members who are currently in their seventh year or more of service and it would be unfortunate if the community were to lose their valuable service because of artificially imposed term limits. While the Neighborhood Commission Report spoke of concerns relating to entrenchment at some Boards, that has certainly not been our experience. We have an open board which operates on a consensus basis and has very good relations with and support from the community. Speaking for our Baird, we wish to go on record as saying that the system is not broken and ether is no need to fix it.

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Robert J. Finley
Chair

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