

RES24-105 Testimony

MISC. COMM. 182

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Apr 17, 2024 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 0

Oppose: 1

I wish to comment: 0

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Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Apr 17, 2024 @ 06:00 AM

ORDER OF BUSINESS

REGULAR MEETING
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER
20TH SESSION
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2024
10 A.M.

OPPOSE

[RES24-086](#)

INITIATING AMENDMENTS TO THE REVISED CHARTER OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU 1973 (AMENDED 2017 EDITION), AS AMENDED, RELATING TO THE SALARY COMMISSION.

[RES24-091](#)

INITIATING AMENDMENTS TO THE REVISED CHARTER OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU 1973 (AMENDED 2017 EDITION), AS AMENDED, RELATING TO THE SALARY COMMISSION.

[RES24-105](#)

INITIATING AMENDMENTS TO THE REVISED CHARTER OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU 1973 (AMENDED 2017 EDITION), AS AMENDED, RELATING TO SALARIES.

[RES23-193](#)

INITIATING AMENDMENTS TO THE REVISED CHARTER OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU 1973 (AMENDED 2017 EDITION), AS AMENDED, RELATING TO THE SALARY COMMISSION.



Aloha Chair Tommy Waters and City Council Members:

There was a time when serving and occupying Public Offices came out of citizens' desire to give back to society. Many would have accomplished much in their professional careers to allow them to serve freely. They do not demand high compensations and benefits. Serving in Public Offices should not be a life-long profitable career.

The 2023 **pay raise of 64%** was an ugly show of intransigent and undemocratic leadership. **Public Participation was denied.**

Despite widespread outcry of public opposition, the city council dug in its heels to ignore their constituents through refusal to hold hearings for Resolutions on the Salary Commission's 64% pay hike recommendations.

Resolutions 23-81 and 23-82 to reject the 64% were not novel to city council leadership.

In the past, City Council members and Chairs like Ernie Martin had rejected the Salary Commission's recommendations. They rejected such recommendations for pay raises to show empathy and respect for their constituents who were experiencing costs of living woes and so forth.

Unfortunately, in 2023, this City Council chose to ignore and bulldoze the whopping 64% pay raise through despite overwhelming public opposition.

<https://www.change.org/p/don-t-hide-let-the-people-decide-on-your-64-pay-raise>

The decision to **embrace the 64% pay raise** in 2023 and now to **reject this year's 3% pay raise** is not lost on the public consciousness.

I do not see a compelling need to create all these city charter amendments. There are existing tools in place. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION and TRANSPARENCY are the foundational keys to good governance.** The Public must have the right to discuss and participate in all proposed Salary Commission's recommendations through the elected City Council. These are good governance values that the City Council must accept and implement.

Relating to the Honolulu Salary Commission, the public has consistently questioned the possible conflicts of interest and its arms length decision-making. Many Commissions and Boards are seen as an extension of the Mayor and/or City Council's agenda. These Boards and Commissions must be independent to provide public trust and confidence.

The surest way to cure the public's lack of trust and suspicions would be to **discontinue** the tradition of appointing members from the so-to-speak "inner circle" or those who have related business relationships with city hall.

Is City Hall confident enough to simply open the telephone directory, pick the Everyman and nominate them to these Boards and Commissions? Allowing the Tom, Dick and Harry would be the epitome of grassroots and independent Public Participation. The City already provide existing legal counsel and staff to support to these boards and commissions members.

Sincerely,
Choon James
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