

THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

MEDIA ADVISORY

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CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION URGES S. 147 REJECTION

Panel Calls the Akaka Bill Discriminatory and Divisive

WASHINGTON, DC – The United States Commission on Civil Rights today urged the U.S. Congress to reject the Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act of 2005, popularly known as the “Akaka Bill,” based on factfinding at its January 20, 2006, briefing. The Commission recommended against the Akaka Bill, as reported out of committee, “or any other legislation that would discriminate on the basis of race or national origin and further subdivide the American people into discrete subgroups accorded varying degrees of privilege.”

“I am concerned that the Akaka Bill would authorize a government entity to treat people differently based on their race and ethnicity,” said Gerald A. Reynolds, Commission Chairman. “This runs counter to the basic American value that the government should not prefer one race over another.”

The Commission approved the report, “The Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act of 2005,” at its May 4, 2006 meeting in its Washington, D.C., headquarters, by a vote of four to two, with one commissioner abstaining. Chairman Gerald A. Reynolds, Vice Chair Abigail Thernstrom, and Commissioners Jennifer Braceras and Ashley Taylor voted in favor of the report. Commissioners Arlan Melendez and Michael Yaki voted against the report and are expected to file a dissenting statement. Commissioner Peter Kirsanow abstained.

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with monitoring federal civil rights enforcement. Members include Chairman Gerald A. Reynolds, Vice Chairman Abigail Thernstrom, and Commissioners Jennifer C. Braceras, Peter N. Kirsanow, Arlan Melendez, Ashley L. Taylor, and Michael Yaki. Kenneth L. Marcus is Staff Director. Commission meetings are open to the media and general public.

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