

**CITY COUNCIL**  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU  
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**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: March 7, 2023

TO: Council Administrative Services

FROM: Councilmember Esther Kia'āina

SUBJECT: Travel Report for the 2023 National Association of Counties Legislative Conference.

Attached you will find my travel report for the 2023 National Association of Counties Legislative Conference in Washington D.C., from February 11 to February 15.

I attended the National Association of Counties (NACo) 2023 Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. from February 11th to February 15th, where almost 2,000 county officials gathered to coordinate on policy issues that affect our communities across the country.

The conference provided an opportunity to learn more about legislative and policy ideas to address some of the City and County of Honolulu's most pressing issues (including affordable housing, homelessness, the opioid epidemic, economic revitalization, aging infrastructure, carry and conceal firearm policies), collaborate with other counties on federal policies (e.g. farm bill), learn more about how counties can strategically access and use funding in the American Rescue Plan Act, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, and the Inflation Reduction Act, and to hear from and ask questions of the Biden administration. We attended numerous meetings, general sessions, workshops, and informal NACo conference events, including:

- Agriculture and Rural Affairs Policy Steering Committee Meeting
- Community, Economic and Workforce Development Policy Steering Committee Meeting
- Large Urban County Caucus Business Meeting
- National Democratic County Officials (NDCO) Business Luncheon
- Investments and Opportunities! Implementing the Energy and Climate Provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act at the County Level
- Closing the Loop: Compliance and Reporting for ARPA and LATCF
- 2023 Farm Bill: Overview, Updates & Forecasts
- Listening Session with the Counties of Hawai'i
- General Session
- NACo Board of Directors, Large Urban County Caucus & Rural Action Caucus Joint Reception

In addition to the U.S. Secretary of Treasury Janet Yellen, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, U.S. Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra, and Senior Advisors to the President, the U.S. President Joe Biden himself addressed the attendees of the NACo 2023 legislative conference. President Biden focused substantially on discussing the role of the counties in the stabilization and recovery of the U.S. economy, which is why the American Rescue Plan Act provided direct funding to all counties, and created specific opportunities for counties to access funding and resources via the Bipartisan Reduction Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. The other featured speakers spoke in detail about provisions of key federal legislation and other policy efforts that directly affect and empower counties, availability of competitive grants that counties can apply for, as well as other key resources to address county needs, including

- The Inflation Reduction Act, which
  - Allows counties to elect for direct pay in lieu of certain tax credits,
  - Provides funding to support farmers and ranchers,
  - Provides funding to the Bureau of Reclamation to award grants to counties responsible for water conservation,
  - Provides funding to the EPA to provide financial assistance to counties to support projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and
  - Provides funding to the environmental review improvement fund streamline and expedite federal permitting process.
  
- The Good Jobs Initiative, which provides information and tools to the government and employers to improve job quality and create access to good jobs.
  - One of the key tools is the Good Jobs Principles - eight principles that establish a framework for a shared vision of job quality, which was created by the Department of Commerce and Department of Labor. Given the challenges that the City as an employer and businesses in the City faces in hiring and retaining employees, incorporation of these principles may go a long way to further improving the City and our businesses' appeal as employers
    - Recruitment and Hiring: Qualified applicants are actively recruited – especially those from underserved communities and are free from discrimination. Applicants are evaluated with relevant skills-based requirements and unnecessary educational, credentials and experience requirements are minimized.
    - Benefits: workers are provided family-sustaining benefits that promote economic security and mobility.
    - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility: All workers have equal opportunity and are respected, empowered, and treated fairly. Individuals from underserved communities do not face systemic barriers in the workplace.
    - Empowerment and Representation: Workers can form and join unions and engage in protected, concerted activity without fear of retaliation. Workers contribute to decisions about their work, how it is performed, and organizational direction.
    - Job Security and Working Conditions: Workers have a safe, healthy, and accessible workplace, built on input from workers and their representatives.
    - Organizational Culture: All workers belong, are valued, contribute meaningfully to the organization, and are engaged and respected especially by leadership.
    - Pay: All workers are paid a stable and predictable living wage
    - Skills and Career Advancement: Workers have equitable opportunities and tools to progress to future good jobs
  - We also learned that the federal government tied grants from the Bipartisan Infrastructure bill to the Good Jobs initiative by urging applicants to
    - address racial equity,

- Reduce barriers to opportunity,
  - Provide training and placement and plans for underrepresented workers,
  - Allow free and fair choice to union,
  - Distribute workplace rights notices,
  - Implement local and hiring provisions,
  - Develop a skilled and inclusive local workforce,
  - Use employed, not subcontracted, workforce, and
  - Pay prevailing wages and benefits, etc.
  
- The Emergency Rental Assistance Program, which was funded through the Consolidated Appropriations Act and the American Rescue Plan Act, provided direct funding to states and counties, to assist families with rental and utility payments. As one of the fastest spending recipients in the country, the City and County of Honolulu was noted as one of the counties to recently receive additional reallocated ERA funds. ERA was the first-ever nationwide program aimed at preventing eviction through direct assistance to renters and we learned that these funds really reached the people who needed it the most:
  - 64% of the recipients were extremely low income renters,
  - Black and women renters were the most likely to receive eviction notices prior to the pandemic and were most likely to receive ERA funds, across all regions of the United States, and
  - American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders were all overrepresented recipients.
  
- The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which consists of government representatives from 37 democratic countries that account for 60% of the world gross domestic product, collaborates on policy standards that promote sustainable growth, and is oftentimes relied upon for evidence-based policy analysis and economic data. Their policy briefs, analysis, and policy tools provide resources that counties can use for policy research, policy ideas, and identification of best practices. The OECD has identified global best practices based on the relevant experience of its 37 member countries. While the NACo discussions focused on tools and best practices largely related to affordable housing policy and resettlement of refugees, including recommendations to focus affordable housing policy on increasing supply versus subsidies, and briefs to show how refugees have actually provided countries with opportunity and growth as opposed to being a burden, the OECD also offers tools on
  - Youth well-being,
  - Agriculture and fisheries,
  - Bribery and corruption,
  - Environmental policies and productivity,
  - Gender equality and its role in sustainable development, etc

- The Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, which
  - Allows counties to apply for competitive grants, which comprise 45% of the funding (the other half went directly to states), and
  - Prioritizes funding for off-system bridges, which provides incentives (100% funding is eligible) to governors to fund repairs for bridges maintained by counties.

We also used this time in Washington D.C. to strengthen relationships with Hawai'i congressional delegation members and their staff; U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs staff, leadership at the U.S. Department of Interior; leadership at the Office of Management and Budget; the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders; the President's Asian American and Pacific Islander Liaison; Ambassadors to Compact of Free Association Migrants Communities; staff at the Department of Defense (DOD) Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program; and Hawai'i Governor Josh Green's staff. Due to a packed schedule on the days of the conference, the meetings with one of the Ambassadors, the Deputy Secretary Tommy Beaudreau at the U.S. Department of the Interior, Senior Advisor for Native Hawaiian Affairs at the Department of Interior Summer Sylva, and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs at the U.S. Department of Interior Keone Nakoa, as well as a meet up with U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono's Chief of Staff were scheduled for February 15<sup>th</sup>, the day after the official ending of NACo conference. During these meetings we advocated to further important policies to benefit the people of the City and County of Honolulu, including

- Funding to support the Board of Water Supply due to impacts as a result of fuel spills at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility,
- Funding for communities impacted by Department of Defense installations,
- Funding to support Festival of the Pacific Arts & Culture which will convene in Hawai'i from June 6, 2024 to June 16, 2024,
- Increased funding for affordable housing, including state and county HUD funding allocations (e.g. HOME Investment Partnership) and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program allocations,
- Access by COFA communities to earn U.S. pensions in their home countries, qualify for federal jobs, and access social federal governmental benefits, and
- Allocation of senior leadership position at the U.S. Department of Interior to specifically focus on policies that directly affect Native Hawaiians.
- Federal Grant programs traditional food systems for indigenous peoples.

We also discussed

- The need for all Hawai'i counties and the State of Hawai'i to prioritize applying for federal grants to address local needs, including in particular grants being made available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure and the Inflation Reduction Act,

which reinforced my commitment to urge the City administration to stand up a federal grants team,

- The United States' commitment to strengthening relationships with Pacific Islands, including through the establishment of new U.S. embassies in Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, and Tonga,
- U.S. Department of Interior's proposed consultation policy with the Native Hawaiian community,
- Updates to the 2030 census Asian American Pacific Islander check off boxes to conform with OMB's 1997 Standards on Race and Ethnicity policy,
- OMB's interagency review of the 1997 Standards on Race and Ethnicity policy,
- The future of Hā'iku stairs,
- Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander pipeline for employment within the federal government, and
- The overall Native Hawaiian - Federal relationship.

Moreover, we further strengthened relationships with other Hawai'i county representatives and discussed additional issues that affect all of our counties, including

- Collection of and distribution of traffic fines,
- Collection of county transient accommodation taxes,
- COFA impacts and access by COFA communities to basic federal government benefits,
- County and state sensitive places legislation related to public carrying of firearms, and
- Property tax valuation impacts and relief options.

I am looking forward to continuing this dialogue with our neighbor island council members throughout the year and at the September 2023 Hawai'i State Association of Counties annual conference in Kaua'i.

I continue to believe that NACo is a resource for legislative and policy ideas and the annual Legislative Conference provides opportunities to strengthen relationships with federal officials to advocate on behalf of the people of the City and County of Honolulu. Collaboration with NACo and NACo members can be a powerful tool to advocate for change in federal laws and policies and NACo has many tools available to support members, including the Housing Matchmaker Tool, the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund Advocacy Toolkit, Key Indicators of Economic Mobility, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Key Terms of Definitions.



*Councilmember Kia'aina and Jocelyn Doane in front of the U.S. Department of Interior*



*Councilmember Kia'aina with Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary at Interior Joan M. Mooney*



*Council Chair Waters, Councilmember Kia'āina, Hawai'i island Councilmember Kierkiewicz, and council staff with Office of Management and Budget Director Shalanda Young and Deputy Director Nani Coloretti*



*Councilmember Kia'āina, Jocelyn Doane, Makanani Salā, Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts, Erika Moritsugu, Deputy Assistant to the President and Asian American and Pacific Islander Senior Liaison, Krystal Ka'ai, Executive Director, White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, Tara Gumapac, Evan Anderson, and Nawahine Lanzilotti.*





*Council Chair Waters, Councilmember Kia'aina, and council staff with U.S. Senator Brian Schatz, Jennifer Romero-Monaco, Democratic Staff Director and Chief Counsel of the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs and U.S. Senate staff*



*Councilmember Kia'aina and Jocelyn Doane with Coti Haia, Chief of Staff to U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono, Breann Nu'uhiwa, Deputy Staff Director at U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and 'ohana Nu'uhiwa*

City Council  
City and County of Honolulu

# CLAIM FOR TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT


Date: 03/08/2023

Traveler: Esther Kia'aina  
Event: 2023 NACo Legislative Conference  
Location: Washington, D.C.  
Dates: From Feb. 11, 2023

To Feb. 15, 2023

Description	Amount	Notes:
1. Registration Fee		
2. Airfare		
3. Hotel	1820.82	
4. Meals		
5. Ground Transportation	271.68	
6. Tips		
7. Other		
Other		
Other		
8. Adjustment		
TOTAL REIMBURSEMENT	2092.5 ;	

This is to certify that the above data, based upon receipts submitted to Council Administrative Support Services via a CCLTRVL02 form, is accurate. Further, I am claiming reimbursement for expenses associated with a trip in which City business was conducted and personal funds were used to advance payment:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Traveler

3-8-23  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date