

CITY COUNCIL
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
530 SOUTH KING STREET, ROOM 202
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-3065
TELEPHONE: (808) 768-5010 • FAX: (808) 768-5011

ESTHER KIA'ĀINA
VICE CHAIR
HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL, DISTRICT 3
Email: ekiaaina@honolulu.gov
Telephone: (808) 768-5003

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 23, 2024

TO: Council Administrative Services

FROM: Councilmember Esther Kia'āina *Ekia*

SUBJECT: Travel Report for the 2024 National Association of Counties Legislative Conference in Washington D.C., from February 11-13, 2024.

Attached you will find my travel report for the 2024 National Association of Counties Legislative Conference in Washington D.C., from February 11-13, 2024.

I attended the 2024 National Association of Counties Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., from February 11-13, 2024.

One of the key outcomes of the NACo conference is strengthening intergovernmental relations with other county officials across the country, as well as interface with federal officials in the Executive Branch and Congress, who share their expertise on how counties can better navigate the federal system for funding and policy priorities.



The conference brought together nearly 2,000 county officials to focus on federal policy issues that impact counties and our residents.



Chair Tommy Waters and I represented the City and County of Honolulu.

As a collective, the country's 3,069 county governments, including the City and County of Honolulu, provide essential building blocks for healthy, safe and vibrant communities.

Counties invest over \$600 billion each year through the leadership of 38,000 county elected officials and almost 3.6 million county employees. Counties support and maintain key public and community infrastructure, help nurture and sustain a skilled workforce to support dynamic local economies, and promote public health and safety to protect our citizens.

Here are the 2024 NACo Federal Policy Priorities:

- Direct Investment in Counties
- Elections and Election Workers
- Mental and Behavioral Health
- Housing
- Farm Bill
- Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools (SRS)
- Federal Felxibilities for Economic Mobility
- Land Use and Environmental Quality
- Disaster Preparedness Response and Recovery
- High Speed Internet
- Supreme Court Advocacy

At the General Session, on February 12, President Joe Biden addressed the NACo conference attendees where he talked about his own personal experience of being a county official and how important counties are to improving the quality of life for communities across the country.



NACo President Mary Jo McGuire welcomes President Joe Biden to the Legislative Conference.



NACo Immediate Past President Denise Winfrey and U.S. Rep. Marc Molinaro underscore the importance of the federal-state-local partnership.



NACo 2nd VP J.D. Clark and Deputy U.S. Commerce Sec. Don Graves discuss the Affordable Connectivity Program and other efforts to expand broadband access.

I also attended a briefing entitled "Future-Proofing County Property Now and Beyond: A Summit on Disaster Preparedness and Insurance, where we heard from Steven Seitz, the Director for the Federal Insurance Office of the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

In the evening, I attended a reception at the Embassy of France for the Large Urban County Caucus, Rural Action Caucus, and NACo's Board of Directors, where we continued to network with county officials from across the country.

On February 13, I attended a listening session by the Department of Defense for Hawaii county officials. In attendance was:

- Matt Chase, Executive Director for NACo
- Brendan Owens, Assistant Secretary for Defense for Energy, Installations, and Environment
- Ron Tickle, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Environmental Management and Restoration
- Dan Glasson, Deputy Director of Community Investment, Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation
- Kristin Thomasgard, Director, DOD Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program

At the meeting, DOD officials said they wanted to hear about the concerns of Hawaii County officials. On my end, I told them that while I appreciated DOD's REPI program on helping to mitigate impacts on our natural resources, that I expect more can be done by DOD to help Hawaii on invasive species management issues, particularly since they brought the coconut rhinoceros beetle to Hawaii at Hickam Air Force Base, and allowed it to spread throughout Oahu and to other islands as well. There is a 2015 Regional Biosecurity Plan for Micronesia and Hawaii and other initiatives that they can help the state and counties to collaborate on. I also told them that all new DOD officials should undertake training exercises for Native Hawaiian history, land tenure, and traditional and customary rights.

I also had a meeting with the Neil Ruiz, Head of New Research Initiatives, Pew Research Center, who interviewed me since they will be doing a study on Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. I shared with them the historical context of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders and their challenges.



Meeting with Neil Ruiz, Head of New Research Initiatives, Pew Research Center.

During the afternoon of Feb. 13, I had joint meetings with other Hawaii county officials with Rep. Jill Tokuda and Rep. Ed Case. In both meetings, we talked about NACo federal priorities, and each island talked about issues important to them. For Oahu, I spoke about support for H.R. 7024, the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program, which passed the House and is pending before the Senate. The bill will allow for more funding to our state LIHTC program, which in turn would allow for more affordable housing projects that we support at the City and County of Honolulu.

I also raised the issue of the need for better collaboration among federal, state, and county officials on invasive species management. I told them, like DOD, about the 2015 Regional Biosecurity Plan for Micronesia and Hawaii. And I explained that failure for the federal government, including DOD, to help the state and counties would be disastrous for Hawaii's economy and environment.



Meeting with Rep. Jill Tokuda



Meeting with Rep. Ed. Case

In the evening of Feb. 13, I also met with Coti Haia, Chief of Staff for Senator Mazie Hirono, and Wendy Clerinx, Chief of Staff for Rep. Jill Tokuda to give them an update of what we are doing at the City and County of Honolulu.

City Council
City and County of Honolulu

CLAIM FOR TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

Date: February 26, 2024

Traveler: Esther Kia'aina


Event: 2024 NACo Legislative Conference

Location: Washington D.C.

Dates: From Feb. 11, 2024 To Feb. 13, 2024

Description	Amount	Notes:
1. Registration Fee		
2. Airfare		
3. Hotel	493.95	
4. Meals		
5. Ground Transportation	202.91	
6. Tips		
7. Other		
Other		
Other		
8. Adjustment		
TOTAL REIMBURSEMENT	696.86	

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

2/26/24

Date