

WEST MAUI TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION

Advocating For You!

email: wmta@maui.net home page: www.westmaui.org
mailing address: PO Box 10338, Lahaina, HI 96761 phone: 808-661-7990 fax: 808-661-7992

A'ohe Hana Nui Ke Alu 'ia (No task is too large when we work together)

THE VOICE

Newsletter of the West Maui Taxpayers Association – Oct 2021

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – Joseph D. Pluta



Aloha Dear Friends of West Maui,

We hope this Newsletter finds you and your family in good health. Please review the articles in this newsletter and let us hear from you. We have some good news.

Since 1979, at the very beginning of WMTA; improved access to essential health care services has been at the top of our list of goals and objectives. We began our effort to develop the Napili Fire and Ambulance station and did what no other community in Hawaii did by privately funding ours that has literally saved lives and millions of dollars to our community since it's successful completion. Next, we lobbied and did the research and submittals for a private developer to obtain a CON for a West Maui Hospital that we were told would be impossible.

We have been working with some excellent Cancer doctor specialists to bring a Cancer Treatment Center with Radiation Therapy Services to West Maui for the past few years, and just a few days ago, we received good news. We were advised that the application submitted to the State of Hawaii Health and Planning Development Agency, SHPDA, has been "deemed complete." That great news means that hearings can begin, and we will be rallying community support for these hearings with testimonies towards the official approval and awarding of the necessary CON.

So, while we continue to work to eliminate the burdensome and controversial CON requirement, we are working within the existing system framework to get it done as lives are literally at stake. Nearly half of all cancer deaths are preventable. That's the bottom line.

We respectfully suggest that supporting our efforts for improved health and safety planning and access to essential healthcare services in West Maui deserve your immediate attention and support. Our track record is proof that with God's help, and your financial support, we can do the impossible and obtain life saving essential services to our community. PLEASE HELP US SAVE LIVES WITH YOUR TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CHARITABLE GIFT TODAY! MAHALO!

Mahalo nui loa.

Joseph D. Pluta – President/ Treasurer

OVER DECADES, HAWAII CUT ACUTE CARE HOSPITAL BEDS. THEN CAME THE PANDEMIC

CIVIL BEAT BY KIRSTIN DOWNEY *(Reprinted with Permission)*

Health and government officials argued that advances in medicine and patient preference reduced the need for the beds, but now, there aren't enough.

By [Kirstin Downey](#) / September 13, 2021 Reading time: 9 minutes.

The alarming prospect of rationed care is revealing an underlying problem: As a result of government policy, Hawaii does not have enough acute care hospital beds.

In fact, Hawaii has among the fewest beds per capita of any state in the nation, according to the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#). Nationwide, the U.S. average is 2.4 beds per 1,000 people, but Hawaii has only 1.9.



Only eight states have fewer beds per thousand people, according to the Kaiser foundation. Two of those with the lowest numbers, Idaho and Oregon, are [similarly running](#) out of intensive care beds, with government officials warning that it may be difficult to provide the same level of care as in more normal times.

All three states had prided themselves on cost reduction strategies that made health care operations more profitable in good times despite the reality that epidemics are a recurring and predictable part of the human condition — Spanish flu, bubonic plague, syphilis, respiratory viruses, among others.

As Hawaii's population increased, the number of hospital beds decreased, and now the state ranks near the bottom in beds per capita.

For example, more than [2,200 people died of AIDS in Hawaii](#), mostly in the 1980s and 1990s, almost four times as many as have died from Covid-19 so far, with many of them requiring hospitalization.

Current health policy, here and across the nation, seems to have forgotten the past.

“We were very successful at caring for people outside hospitals,” said Larry Levitt, the Oakland-based health policy research director at the Kaiser Family Foundation. “It saved money but it left us very vulnerable in a pandemic. Our health care system is largely profit-driven and there was no money or incentive to provide excess capacity in case a pandemic hit.”

In recent decades, as Hawaii's population grew, its number of beds actually fell. [In 2004](#), for example, there were 2,047 acute care beds in Honolulu County, according to the Hawaii State Health Planning and Development Agency, but [by 2019, the number had fallen](#) to 1,910. In other words, while the island's population grew, the state's hospital capacity contracted.

This mirrored a national trend, now visible amid the Covid pandemic. [In 1975, the United States had 1.5 million](#) hospital beds, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But by 2015, the number had fallen to fewer than 898,000. In other words, the country's population climbed 48%, but the number of beds available for people who fell ill declined 40%.

The phenomenon was driven by federal and state health policy. Health industry executives and government officials cut the number of hospital beds to treat people at lower cost in alternative settings, arguing that technological advances reduced the need for lengthy convalescence, that new drugs promoted faster recovery and that patients preferred to avoid hospital stays and wanted to recover at home.

The federal government and private insurers changed the way they paid hospitals for medical services, giving them financial incentives to move people out of hospital beds more quickly. That, in turn, led to the perception that empty hospital beds were useless assets.

There was a parallel problem as well. The failure to adequately staff hospitals at times when there were only a few patients meant that hospitals didn't have a deep bench of home-grown nurses and doctors to call on when needs grew high, as they are now.

In a sense, it was the just-in-time manufacturing philosophy brought to health care.

These patterns spread across the country but were adopted with greater enthusiasm in the western states, according to Levitt.

“The Pacific U.S. is where managed care got its start,” he said. “This is very much a Pacific phenomenon.”

In Hawaii, the consequences of those decisions are becoming clear. Last week, [state hospital executives reported](#) that the state’s 223 licensed intensive care beds were 100% occupied, half of them by Covid patients and half by people with other ailments.

On Monday, Hawaii Gov. David [Ige signed an executive order](#) that will give hospital administrators immunity from liability for actions that give preferential care to one group of patients over another. Under that order, “cancelling or postponing elective surgeries and procedures” will be permitted “as each facility determines to be appropriate under the circumstances presented by the COVID-19 emergency.”

Health care rationing — with people being denied care for worrisome ailments — is already occurring because many hospitals, including The Queen’s Medical Center, Straub Medical Center and Kaiser Permanente Hawaii, have told patients without Covid that they are limiting the kinds of care they can receive until the crisis passes. [Even patients with breast cancer](#) have been told they must wait for care until the Covid crisis eases.

In ordinary times the shortage was not a major problem. Hawaii has a healthy population and its high rate of health insurance — [96%](#) — means that many people can afford to get preventive care that heads off more serious issues. In fact, Hawaii’s health system has long been a [source of local pride](#).

But there were problems lurking under the surface.



“The surge in Covid and delta cases is not the cause of the shortage of health care capacity,” said Keli`i Akina, president and chief executive officer of the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, a conservative think tank based in Honolulu. “It’s the stress test of our health care capacity.”

Officials at the state health department declined to comment.

Hilton Raethel, president and CEO of the Healthcare Association of Hawaii, said the state has taken a number of steps to meet the surge in need for acute care beds.

In an emailed statement, Hilton Raethel, president of the Healthcare Association of Hawaii, the hospital industry trade group, said that Hawaii is the healthiest state in the nation and normally does not require so many hospital beds. Patients are regularly better served in non-hospital settings, he wrote in an email to Civil Beat.

He said that the hospital industry is adjusting to the changing conditions.

“During this once-in-a-century pandemic, Hawaii has been protecting — and adding — capacity through a number of means including offering monoclonal antibody treatments; providing surge staffing to expand ER capacity; delaying elective surgeries when appropriate; enforcing robust public health measures such as masking, limited gatherings, and social distancing; and mandating vaccinations in certain sectors.”

Pop-up field hospitals can provide additional hospital beds where necessary, he wrote.

Critics say that state health policy has been short-sighted in permitting further cutbacks, even now, in the face of rising need.

[As recently as 2016](#), cash-strapped Wahiawa General Hospital, which has served as a hub for care in rural central Oahu since 1944, had 57 acute-care beds. [In June](#), Hawaii’s State Health Planning and Development Agency gave [Wahiawa permission to “delete” 21 medical/surgical beds](#) and use the space for nursing home care and rehabilitation patients.

Wahiawa area residents had rallied in defense of the hospital and have watched as the hospital contracted.

"It took care of Wahiawa's needs really well," said Martha Peterson, president of the Wahiawa General Hospital Auxiliary and a member of the group since the 1960s. "We still need it. We really need it."

In addition to failing to protect existing health resources, the state has made it hard for new entrants into the market. [According to the Mercatus Center](#), a conservative think-tank at George Mason University in the Washington D.C. suburbs, Hawaii has more regulatory hurdles for new health care facilities than any other state, with 28 separate services subject to state limitations. These restrictions are called "Certificate of Need" laws, which are administered by the state health planning agency, which decides which projects can go forward and which it will block.



"The number of services where a certificate of need is needed is quite high, and the fees in Hawaii are quite high as well," said Mathew D. Mitchell, senior research fellow at Mercatus, who did the state-to-state comparisons. "Big hospital systems like certificates of need. They don't protect patients but it protects the bottom line."

In 2006, as a result of a certificate of need review, the [state agency rejected the application](#) of a [proposed 150-bed hospital](#) in Kihei, Maui, on the grounds that it was not needed and would injure the island's primary hospital, Maui Memorial Medical Center in Wailuku.

A state agency declined to issue a certificate of need for a new hospital on Maui, saying it would harm the main hospital on the island, Maui Memorial Medical Center.

Joseph Pluta, a real estate broker who also serves as president of the West Maui Improvement Foundation, was a vocal supporter of the proposed Kihei hospital, and said the state's decision to block its construction has cost lives on Maui.

"The biggest reason Hawaii doesn't have enough beds is that certificate of need requirement," Pluta said. "It's a self-inflicted problem."

In the past year, more than a dozen states have suspended their certificate of need requirements or enabled emergency provisions to speed building additional capacity, according to Mercatus. [New Jersey](#) and [New York](#), which have the nation's highest and third-highest Covid death rates, both waived state hospital-bed review requirements last year in response to the emergency.

Hawaii's bed occupancy level, recently projected at about 79% by the American Hospital Association, [places the state with a comparable crisis level](#) to Texas, Alabama, South Carolina and Florida, states that have many more cases of Covid but more available hospital beds where patients can be treated.

In a telephone interview, Peter Sybinsky, a former state health department director in the 1990s and most recently president and chief executive officer of the Hawaii Health Information Corp., now retired, said that excess beds have been viewed in the state as "excess capacity." Hospital beds were consequently taken out of service, he said.

"Surge capacity wasn't on our radar," he said. "We couldn't prepare for what we didn't expect." He said that it had been a long time since Hawaii had a pandemic, and no one really thought it would be necessary to provide the kind of surge capacity that Hawaii needs now. In any case, it would be very expensive to provide and maintain it, he said.



"It's not solvable right now," he said. "You've got to work with what you have and be creative with what you have."

About the Author

[Kirstin Downey](#)

A Kailua girl, Kirstin Downey is a special correspondent for Civil Beat. A longtime reporter for The Washington Post, she is the author of "The Woman Behind the New Deal," "Isabella the Warrior Queen" and an upcoming biography of King Kaumualii of Kauai. She can be reached

at kdowney@civilbeat.org.



SAVE THE DATE – ANNUAL MEETING 2022

The West Maui Taxpayers Association (WMTA) invite you to attend the
WMTA 2022 Annual Meeting
Thursday, January 6, 2022 at 5:30 pm

at the Lahaina Civic Center. Attendance may be limited, or event may be switched to virtual event based on State & County rules & orders at that time.

Welcome & Short Business meeting begins at 5:30 PM with Official WMTA business, including the Election of its Board of Directors. Slate of Directors include Dean Louie, Richard Jarman, Rick Nava, Gregg Nelson, Jess “Joe” Park, Joseph Pluta, Fereshteh Tali, and Dennis Terpin.

Proxy can be found on the last page of this newsletter – please complete and return ASAP, as with COVID, we need to ensure we have the proxies in place.

Immediately following this short business meeting will be presentations important to the West Maui community. Or last in person annual meeting we had approximately 300 attendees enjoyed the interesting community presentations on WMTA top issues. Due to State and County emergency orders, our attendance may be limited, or the event may be virtual. Invited guest speakers are Senator Roz Baker, State Representative Angus McKelvey, Mayor Michael Victorino, West Maui Councilmember Tamara Paltin. Speakers for Special Presentations are still being determined at the time of this printing.

The major purpose of the meeting is to have elected officials address issues of interest to the West Maui community, and to have special presentations on major project impacting the Isolated West Maui Community as illustrated above.

West Maui is a unique and vibrant community that provides employment opportunities and generates significant tax revenues for all levels of government. WMTA is also unique in that our mission is to promote efficient use of the taxes generated to invest in infrastructure, services and amenities that help ensure that West Maui remains one of the best places to live, work and visit in the world. For any questions, please email ([click here for email](#)), (links to wmta@maui.net with cc: pluta@maui.net & jdp@maui.net) or call 808-661-7990.

WMTA MEMBERSHIP REPORT – Joseph D. Pluta, President

I invite you to join us in a full court, all hands-on deck effort to fuel our advocacy for necessary West Maui community priorities. We suggest that it may be appropriate for us to change the way we think about what we think about with respect to “how” to meet community needs. We all agree that we need more housing in West Maui for our workforce with 7000 cars driving here daily to go to work from central maui and elsewhere because we don’t have enough here. It seems our Maui County Council believes that eliminating hundreds of acres where housing currently is allowed is somehow beneficial to obtaining more affordable housing? Or that only “100% affordable in perpetuity” housing should be approved?

Existing policy roadblocks and Obstructionist regulations and ordinances in place now need to be changed.

Covid-19 has shown new and growing challenges to confront including the fact that we pay the highest prices in the World for housing, medicine and access to health care.

We hope that the WMTA can count on your considering us to be worthy of your continued support. We need your support to address major challenges ahead in the coming year. Remember, we do not receive governmental financial assistance. We exist solely on the basis of members dues and donations.

Membership dues only go so far, and your additional financial support is needed to fund our efforts to continue to advocate on your behalf. Our track record proves that we have been providing our community an excellent return on their investment in supporting us. The needs are immense, and we are asking you to join us with a generous contribution to aid our work. We suggest your immediate consideration of a generous charitable gift to our sister organization, the West Maui Improvement Foundation Inc. which is a 501-c-3 Charity for 100% tax deductible treatment.

WMTA and WMIF urgently need your recommitment to support our advocacy efforts on your behalf. Please use the donation form attached or donate via our web site at www.westmaui.org. Do it today! Mahalo nui loa!



PLEASE RETURN THIS PAGE

WEST MAUI TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION – PROXY

The undersigned does hereby constitute and appoint the West Maui Taxpayers Association Board of Directors as attorney or agent, with full power of substitution, to act in the undersigned's name, place and stead, to represent that member for quorum purposes only so that the business that properly comes before the meeting can be conducted by those present. It is valid only for the ANNUAL MEETING of the WEST MAUI TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION to be held on **Thursday, January 6, 2022**. Any WMTA member present in person may elect to vote upon such business that may properly come before the meeting, including the election of Directors. This Proxy will be valid only for the above-cited meeting and adjournments thereof, may be revoked prior to its exercise and shall be returned upon request if the undersigned attends the meeting and desires to vote in person.

DATE SIGNED: _____ (Required by law)

NAME OF MEMBER (PRINTED-required by law)

SIGNATURE OF MEMBER

- Please sign your name as it appears in YOUR WMTA MEMBERSHIP records. Executors, Administrators, trustees, guardians, conservators, and corporate officers are to add their Titles and, if not already done. Submit a copy of their appointment.
- For this proxy to be valid:
 - The proxy giver must provide his or her printed name, signature, and the date that this proxy was signed.
 - This proxy must be received by the Association's Secretary. **no later than 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 5, 2022. You can send by mail: at 181 Lahainaluna Road, Suite I, Lahaina, Maui, HI 96761, or by email your proxy to wmta@maui.net or by fax to 808-661-7992.**
- The Board of Directors requests that a unanimous ballot be cast in favor of the Board Members to be elected as listed below. Yes (Check this box to vote unanimous in favor for the Slate of Directors)



PROXY: Please Use Return Envelope and Return the Portion Above to WMTA, PO Box 10338, Lahaina, HI 96761 or 181 Lahainaluna Road, Suite I, Lahaina, HI 96761 Must reach our office by Wed, January 5, 2022 You may also scan then email to wmta@maui.net or fax to 808-661-7992.

WEST MAUI TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION, 2022 ANNUAL MEETING- ELECTION OF DIRECTORS - SLATE OF DIRECTORS

Richard Jarman
Dean Louie
Rick Nava

Gregg Nelson
Jess "Joe" Park
Joseph Pluta

Feresteh Tali
Dennis Terpin

The WMTA Bylaws state: "There shall be a total of 12 Directors, including the Officers. No person shall be empowered to vote or be eligible for election to any office in the Organization whose membership dues have not been paid in full."

REMINDER: ONLY ACTIVE DUES PAYING MEMBERS ARE ALLOWED TO VOTE!

PLEASE CONSIDER AN ADDITIONAL DONATION

**West Maui Taxpayers Association
MEMBERSHIP FORM - IRS EIN 99-0160368 - NON PROFIT 501C (4)**

You can also pay online at <http://www.westmaui.org/joinnow.html>

Member Name: _____
 Check here to have your name kept private in publications and acknowledgements.

Join the WMTA Email List: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ ST: _____ Zip: _____

Day Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____ Fax: _____

<p>\$ _____ MEMBERSHIP</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am a member and renewing my dues</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am not a member but would like to join</p>	<p>Membership Levels</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Community Supporter \$25/year</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Community Leader \$50.00/year</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Families \$100/year</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Businesses \$100/year</p> <p><input type="radio"/> AOA – email wmta@maui.net</p>
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\$ _____ ADDITIONAL DONATION WMTA is a 501-c-4 Non-Profit Organization. "Contributions to civic leagues or other section 501(c)(4) organizations generally are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. They may be deductible as trade or business expenses, if ordinary and necessary in the conduct of the taxpayer's business." (Source: IRS.Gov). Please check with your tax adviser.

Memberships effective for one year upon receipt of membership dues payment.

Mail Checks, payable to "West Maui Taxpayers Association", to:
West Maui Taxpayers Association PO Box 10338 • Lahaina, HI 96761

NWS2021-10

THE VOICE

Newsletter of the
West Maui Taxpayers Association
OCTOBER 2021

**"Bringing the West Maui
Community Together,
Advocating for You"**
A 501-C-4 Community Organization

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Visit www.WestMaui.org
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Look for us on



(www.WestMaui.org has links)