

FROM THE DESK OF
LINDA LINGLE
FORMER GOVERNOR
STATE OF HAWAII

July 15, 2012

Senator Chuck Grassley
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Jeff Sessions
326 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510 -0104

Dear Senators Grassley and Sessions:

I am writing in reaction to an article that appeared in our local newspaper yesterday regarding a letter you wrote to the Chief Judge of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals asking him to consider canceling an upcoming, long-planned conference on the Island of Maui here in the State of Hawaii.

First, I want to thank you for your many years of service to the people of your states and the nation, and to let you know that I respect your desire to get the federal government's spending on a more sustainable path.

It is certainly a U.S. Senator's job, indeed their responsibility, to oversee and monitor government spending and I commend you for that. But an event such as the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals' planned conference on the Island of Maui in the State of Hawaii is usually booked years in advance and many people and businesses will be hurt if it is cancelled.

While I agree with your description of Hawaii as an "island paradise," your characterization of Hawaii as "the most expensive and far-flung island paradise within the Circuit" is a mischaracterization of the great value offered by Hawaii's hotels.

In addition, your letter implies that serious business cannot be conducted in Hawaii. Because of your stature as United States Senators, your words are widely distributed. As the former Mayor of Maui and Governor of Hawaii, I spent many years working with our visitor industry leaders to communicate accurately that we are both the world's best place to vacation as well as a place where serious business is conducted. Each year hundreds of business and professional meetings are held in Hawaii. Recently we hosted many of the world's leaders at the APEC Conference, which underscored the fact that serious business can be conducted in a location that is beautiful and where you will be warmly welcomed.

And while it is true that Hawaii is home to some of the most beautiful and luxurious hotels in the world, we also have many mid-range hotels, timeshares and bed and breakfast accommodations as well.

I believe that nearly all of the 7 million visitors a year to Hawaii would tell you that whether they stayed in a mid-range or five-star hotel, they were equally treated to the same Aloha spirit. This unique hospitality is the main reason people and organizations like to visit Hawaii year after year.

I know it was not your intention to hurt Hawaii, but your use of the words “opulence” and “most expensive...within the circuit” reinforces a misperception that Hawaii is not affordable to most people, and that is simply not true. The fact that more than 7 million people a year visit Hawaii is proof that people from all economic backgrounds are able to afford a trip to Hawaii.

Hawaii's hotels offer great room rates and gateway cities on the U.S. mainland offer outstanding airfares that are competitive with other cities serving the geographical areas that fall into the jurisdiction of the 9th Circuit Court. Hawaii falls into the court's jurisdiction, and the many people who work in Maui's visitor industry - including front office managers, bellmen, parking attendants, chefs, cooks, housekeepers, wait staff, groundskeepers and others - should not suffer the loss of work because a long-planned conference such as this is cancelled.

I know you both are acting in what you believe is the best interest of the country by making sure tax dollars are well spent, and I respect you for doing so. But because I am concerned for the well being of the people of Hawaii, I felt it was important for me to speak up and let you know that mischaracterizations of our visitor industry or the cancellation of this conference would negatively impact real people.

I thank you for considering my thoughts on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda Lingle", with a stylized flourish at the end.

LINDA LINGLE