

GOVERNOR LINGLE SIGNS KEY LEGISLATION TO BOOST RENEWABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION

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HONOLULU – Governor Linda Lingle signed into law today three bills to increase renewable energy generation and reduce the state's dependence on imported oil.

Two of the bills will provide renewable energy project developers with much needed assistance with Hawai'i's complex permitting process. The third bill authorizes the Department of Agriculture to offer a new class of loans in its agricultural and aquaculture loan programs to encourage farmers to contribute to the production of alternative sources of energy.

"This set of legislation is another important step in our long-term plan for energy independence in Hawai'i," said Governor Lingle. "As we continue to work toward achieving our goal of having 70 percent clean energy in Hawai'i by 2030, these new laws will make it easier for businesses to invest in renewable energy projects."

Together, the measures enable the State to oversee and coordinate the facility permitting process, working with federal, state, and county agencies to streamline the process while preserving the authority of the agencies to review and approve permits under their respective jurisdictions.

HB2863 HD2 SD2 CD1, Relating to Renewable Energy, which becomes Act 207, establishes new responsibilities for director of the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) as the State's energy resources coordinator. This position will create a streamlined permitting process that includes state and county permits required for the siting, development, construction, and operation of a new renewable energy facility of at least 200 megawatts of electricity. The bill requires the coordinator to hold a public meeting on the island where the project will be located to promote awareness and encourage public input.

HB2505 HD2 SD2 CD1, Relating to Energy, which becomes Act 208, establishes a full-time renewable energy facilitator position in the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism. The facilitator would report to the state energy coordinator. The facilitator's duties will include facilitating existing permits, proposing changes to the permit process and coordinating energy projects.

HB2261 HD2 SD1, Relating to Agricultural Loans, which becomes Act 209, establishes a new class of loans that will help farmers create their own power for their operations, thus helping to preserve the future of farming and aquaculture in the State of Hawai'i. The bill expands the State's existing agricultural and aquaculture loan programs to allow farmers to develop renewable energy for their farms using renewable sources such as photovoltaics, hydro, wind, methane, biodeiesel and ethanol. Food safety and product tracking projects would also qualify for the loans.

The maximum loan amount would be \$1,500,000 or 85 percent of the project cost, whichever is less, for up to 40 years. The annual interest rate will be 3 percent for agricultural loans and 5 percent for aquaculture loans.

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