

UNITE HERE!

LOCAL 5 HAWAII



Eric Gill, Financial Secretary-Treasurer

Hernando Ramos Tan, President

Godfrey Maashiro, Senior Vice-President

Monday, January 24, 2011

The Honorable Clayton Hee, Chair
and Members
Hawaii State Legislature
Committee on Judiciary & Labor
State Capitol
415 S. Beretania Street

Chair Hee, Vice-Chair Shimabukuro, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary & Labor:

On behalf of UNITE HERE Local 5, a local labor organization representing nearly 11,000 hotel, health care and food service workers employed throughout our State, I hereby register our organizations full support for the intent of Senate Bill 232 relating to Civil Unions. But as this Legislature continues to convene discussion on this most important of issues, we would also humbly ask for consideration of Senate Bill 231 which would improve upon clarifying the intent and purpose of Senate Bill 232.

In sum, SB 232 is not about validating people's existence, nor is it about endangering social institutions. This bill is about economic justice, and the right of each of us to expect and receive fair treatment from our government.

Equality before the law is not a new concept. The notion that all people have a right to equal treatment from government is at the foundation of our democracy. It is the basic ideal that our government is expected to live up to. But in a society where our government has solemnly pledged to provide equal rights for all, we have failed to do so for some.

Equal rights and equal treatment for all is not just the right thing to do. It is key to bringing our society together, so we can work toward a common purpose. Our union has learned this, not from any book, but in practice.

Our union is an organization whose mission, role and existence is founded on the solidarity and concerted activity of our members. Our most fundamental task is to build unity and common purpose among our members. To do this, we must overcome divisions of all sorts that exist among our extended family. We need to bring people whose ancestors have been here for centuries together with those recently arrived from many countries. In order to have the power to protect any of our members, we must unite people of different religions, different languages, different skin colors, different traditions. And, different ways of living their private lives, and organizing their families.

In order for each person to commit to building our union, we have to fight for every person. Our members need to see us include everyone, for each individual to feel included.

That's why we fight for immigrant rights at the same time we fight for the rights of Native Hawaiians. We fight for equal treatment between men and women, between young and old, between races of people from all over the globe.

That's why we fight for the rights of those of us whose families are different, who have fallen in love differently. If we fail to fight for each, we undermine the unity and power of all.

Now is the time for Hawaii's legislature to take a stand. Bring us together. Care for all of us, equally.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Gill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "G".

Eric Gill
Financial Secretary-Treasurer