Aloha everybody.

Well, here we go. The legislative session is upon us again, with hundreds of issues that don't always seem to have solutions, and thousands of people who want, and need, specific things from our government. Not everyone will be happy with answers that arise from the session. Disagreements will abound. Some things just won't go our way.

Sometimes it can seem like the whole messy process of democracy divides us more than it unites us, doesn't it?

I've been thinking about that as we're gearing up for Opening Day, and remembering that I was once involved in a deeply divisive issue in my community, one that took years to resolve. (continued on page 2)
When I initially got involved on my group's behalf, I had a hard time understanding why everybody didn't see the issue from the perspective of 'our' people.

Soon, though, it became obvious that our opponents felt just as passionately about the matter, but that they had reached an entirely different conclusion. And some of those folks were very dear to me. So I got together with a close friend, the other 'leader' on my side of the issue. We sat down for a long strategy session. We decided to set aside our own perspectives entirely for a while, and do everything we could to see the issue from our opponents' viewpoint.

How fortunate that we did so. With our newly-expanded awareness, we visited the opposition leaders and told them about our experiment. They were pleased, of course. Beginning that day, we shared a great deal of our information with them, and they with us. We worked with them, rather than against them.

Developing a real understanding from an opposing perspective didn't necessarily make our jobs, or theirs, any easier. Sometimes it made things much harder for all of us. But the experiment ultimately meant that we were able to devise a solution that worked for both sides of a very complex, terribly important, and deeply divisive issue.

As an aside, I have an anecdote from the early days of that campaign. One of the people on 'our' side of the issue was a scientist, one who - inexplicably for a scientist - seemed to care more about scoring points than he cared about accuracy.

We were many hours into a public hearing one day. The room was thick with tension that had been building for hours. Our scientist's turn came to speak. He started in with his usual exaggerations and misinformation. Anger was palpably rising in the room. What to do????

I decided to try something. I turned to the person sitting next to me, one of our opponents whose face was turning scarlet as she listened, and said, in as loud a whisper as I could manage, "We'll pay you to take him off our hands!" She looked at me, astonished, and burst into laughter. Soon the hearing recessed for a few minutes. When we came back, the mood of the room had changed completely, except, of course, for the scientist. He was, and maybe still is, quite angry. But the rest of us finally got to a solution that worked for us all.

Who are your opponents? What do they believe? Why? When you really get inside their heads, how does the issue shift for you? What positives could come from their being victorious? What are potential downsides if you were to achieve complete victory? What does the space in the middle look like?

What are your absolutes, the details about which you will not, and cannot, compromise? Where can you compromise? Why? Do you feel it is important to achieve a real solution, one that works for your opponents as well as for you?

Questions like these have no simple answers. But asking them of ourselves will help us find real answers, every time.

Best wishes for a rich and productive session.

Suzanne
Go to the Legislature’s homepage (http://capitol.hawaii.gov), click on the “Reports and Lists” icon and start to explore. On the left of the screen, you will see the heading “Deadline Tracking.” On the right is a long list of reports that are just a click away. Using these as the session progresses, you will be able to access sortable and downloadable lists of measures that have survived significant deadlines. A great way to keep up with what’s still viable.

Next, scroll down the list of headings on the left. There’s a lot there! You’ll be able to find and customize reports based on committee referrals, who’s introduced legislation, measures by package, and much more. This is also where you’ll find the Daily Updates feature, which was introduced last year.

Take a few minutes now to familiarize yourself with some of the Reports and Lists available -- you’ll be ready to create an easy-to-read, professional report at a moment’s notice!
Get to Know your Deadlines: First Lateral
It'll be here before you know it!

The implementation of deadlines throughout the session effectively reduces the number of pieces of potential legislation. Translated, that means that bills fall by the wayside and may "die" if they fail to meet a deadline.

The First Lateral deadline is one you won't always find listed on the official legislative calendar. That's because it's considered an internal deadline – one that is set by each of the chambers to ensure timely movement of bills through their committees. The First Lateral deadline is the date by which a bill must reach the last committee to which it has been referred in the originating chamber.

That means that a bill needs to be reported out of its second-to-last committee and be filed for second reading by the day before the First Lateral deadline. The next day, the bill can then pass second reading on the floor and move into its last committee for consideration.

Bear in mind that the deadline has no effect on bills that were referred to just one committee – the bill is already in its last committee. But for bills that were referred to more than one committee, this deadline is crucial.

If a bill does not reach its last committee by the First Lateral deadline, it is stopped from moving forward during the session.

FYI: The Senate has established February 15th as its First Lateral deadline for Senate Bills. At press time, the House of Representatives had not published its First Lateral deadline for House Bills.

Workshops
Learn more about the legislative process and how you can participate easily and effectively.
Attend one of PAR's "We the Powerful" workshops – offered in the Public Access Room (Room 401)

Tuesdays 12 noon
Thursdays 5:30 p.m.

Call (587-0478) or email (par@capitol.hawaii.gov) to sign up! They're free (and we promise you'll learn something). Have a group you'd like to get involved? Contact us to set up a workshop.

PAR Mailboxes
The Public Access Room has a limited number of cubby-hole mailboxes for use by groups. Some of these have fallen into disuse, so we're starting fresh again this session. Anyone requesting a mailbox should contact PAR as soon as possible. They're available on a first-come, first-served basis.

PAR Hours during Session
During Session (January 16 – May 2), the Public Access Room (Room 401) has extended hours!

Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Quotes from the File . . .
"Knowledge is power."
- Sir Francis Bacon

"A little knowledge that acts is worth infinitely more than much knowledge that is idle."
- Kahlil Gibran