



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Statement of Senator Daniel K. Akaka
“Federal Agencies and Conference Spending”
Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**

Thank you Chairman Coburn. I consider this hearing very important, and I appreciate the your interest in making sure that federal agencies are spending funds wisely when it comes to sending federal employees to conferences.

I am proud to represent the beautiful state of Hawaii, which is one of the Nation’s premier conference and convention destinations. We in Hawaii are sometimes frustrated by the assumption that a federal employee who attends a conference in Honolulu – for example – is wasting taxpayer dollars. No federal employee should be discouraged from participating in a conference as long as there is a legitimate reason to do so. I know our Chairman’s focus on government efficiency is sincere, and I want to assure him that my constituents share that value too.

We should never forget that Hawaii, our 50th State, is home to nearly 25,000 federal employees – 16,500 of whom are DoD civilian workers – as well as 45,000 active duty members of the Armed Services. Hawaii is headquarters to the US Pacific Command (PACOM) and serves as the operational heart of the world’s largest naval command – the Pacific Fleet – whose reach extends to Africa. PACOM’s operational responsibility covers 105 million square miles – more than 60 percent of the world’s population and \$548 billion in US trade.

We don’t want to unfairly refuse participation in a conference in Hawaii to any federal employee. My constituents should not be denied access to the exchange of ideas and expertise of agencies such as the Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and State, as well the Environmental Protection Agency. There are unique issues that face the people of Hawaii, but by working with the federal government, we can find solutions. Conferences, conventions, and forums all offer important venues for such critical personal interactions.

We in Hawaii have long understood the importance of visitors to our state’s economic vitality. Given the crucial standing that Hawaii and its capitol – Honolulu – hold in this nation, once again I strongly urge that federal employees neither be denied nor discouraged from attending conventions or conferences in the 50th State.