



DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

News Release

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**DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ATTAINS
\$447,500 NATIONAL EMERGENCY GRANT TO ASSIST DISPLACED
WORKERS FROM HAWAII COUNTY**

Funds to be earmarked for Workers Dislocated from Penncro and Associates, Hotel King Kamehameha, and Hokulia Resort.

HONOLULU – The Hawaii Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) has been awarded a \$447,500 National Emergency Grant (NEG) from the U.S. Department Of Labor. The NEG will enable DLIR to assist approximately 153 workers who were dislocated by the closing or reduction in staffing of three Hawaii County-based employers: Penncro and Associates, Hotel King Kamehameha, and Hokulia Resort.

The NEG will be used to provide an array of services for these dislocated workers, including skills assessment, individual counseling, career planning, employment development, occupational skills training, on-the-job training, entrepreneurial training, job-readiness training and adult education. Support services may include childcare, transportation assistance and job-related certifications, uniforms and equipment.

The DLIR applied for the NEG in May 2004 to provide urgent relief to employees who were laid off in three recent instances on the Big Island. These include the March 2004 Penncro and Associates Inc. closure of its Hilo office that displaced 174 employees, the March 2004 Hotel King Kamehameha Kona Beach layoff of 52 employees due to financial hardships and subsequent restructuring plans, and the November 2003 Hokulia, Resort and Golf Course, which laid off 82 employees due to partial suspension of business operations.

"While Hawaii's economy strengthens and grows, and while we maintain the lowest unemployment rate in the nation, we must be mindful and proactive in addressing the needs of those who are displaced due to circumstances beyond their control," said Nelson B. Befitel, Director of Labor and Industrial Relations. "The Lingle-Aiona Administration is working to ensure that all of Hawaii's residents have an opportunity to benefit from the state's economic expansion, and we appreciate the federal government's willingness to partner with us in this effort."

Director Befitel met with federal labor officials last week in Washington, D.C., to discuss opportunities for additional federal funding to train Hawaii's workforce in the construction, health care, hospitality, and high-tech industries. Befitel emphasized the Lingle-Aiona Administration's goal to ensure that residents on the neighbor islands and rural Oahu are provided opportunities to receive the necessary training and skills.

"We are very pleased that Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao quickly awarded us this important grant for Hawaii County workers. It demonstrates that the administration in Washington is receptive to our efforts to grow our job market and support Hawaii workers," continued Befitel.

NEGs are discretionary awards from the Workforce Investment Act that must be approved by the Secretary of Labor and are intended to temporarily expand service capacity at the state and local levels by providing time-limited funding assistance in response to significant dislocation events. Significant events are those that create a sudden need for assistance that cannot reasonably be expected to be accommodated within the on-going operations of the formula-funded Dislocated Worker program, including the discretionary resources reserved at the state level.

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