



HAWAI‘I STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

State of Hawai‘i · Bishop Square, 1001 Bishop Street, ASB Tower 970 · Honolulu, Hawai‘i 96813

NEWS RELEASE

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AKANA V. HAWAI‘I STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

The Hawai‘i State Ethics Commission is pleased to announce a significant legal victory in Akana v. Hawai‘i State Ethics Commission, No. CAAP-19-0000668 (Intermediate Court of Appeals, January 22, 20224) (available at <https://www.courts.state.hi.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/CAAP-19-0000668memop.pdf>). The decision, handed down on January 22, 2024, reinforces the Commission’s commitment to upholding ethical standards and conduct for all state employees.

The Commission previously charged former Office of Hawaiian Affairs Trustee Rowena Akana with violating the state code of ethics and imposed a \$23,106.53 administrative fine.¹ Akana appealed the Commission’s decision contesting, among other things, the applicability of the

¹ The Commission’s order can be found at <https://ethics.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019-02-05Decision.pdf>.

ethics code to an Office of Hawaiian Affairs trustee. The Hawai‘i Intermediate Court of Appeals affirmed the Commission’s decision on all counts.

Commission Chairperson Wesley F. Fong expressed gratitude for the court’s decision, stating “We are happy that the appellate court upheld the Commission’s decision in the Akana case. It shows that no state employee or state board member is above the state ethics law in Hawai‘i.”

The court decision marks a pivotal moment for the Commission, showcasing the resilience and effectiveness of its enforcement efforts. “The public can be confident in the Commission’s ability to address and rectify ethical concerns, contributing to a more accountable and transparent government,” said Fong.

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About the Hawai‘i State Ethics Commission:

The Hawai‘i State Ethics Commission is an independent agency committed to promoting and ensuring ethical conduct in state government. Established to foster public trust, the Commission administers the state’s ethics code and lobbyists law. For more information, visit ethics.hawaii.gov.