



HAWAI'I STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

Komikina Ho'opono Kulekele o Hawai'i Moku'āina

NEWS RELEASE

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STATE ETHICS COMMISSION ANNOUNCES RESOLUTIONS IN LEGISLATIVE AND LOBBYING INVESTIGATIONS

The Hawai'i State Ethics Commission ("Commission") resolved two enforcement matters yesterday.

State Senator Lynn DeCoite

The first matter involved an investigation into State Senator Lynn DeCoite for receiving duplicate reimbursements for the same food expenses related to Legislative Opening Day. Senator DeCoite was reimbursed \$1,151.31 from both her legislative allowance fund and her campaign spending fund. After being notified of the duplicate reimbursements, she repaid the State in full.

Senator DeCoite cooperated with the Commission's investigation, implemented internal office procedures to prevent a recurrence, and agreed to pay a \$500 administrative penalty. The *Settlement of Investigation 2025-2* is available at

<https://files.hawaii.gov/ethics/advice/SOI2025-2.pdf>.

In approving the settlement, the Commission emphasized the seriousness of the violation. It noted that this is the second such violation by a legislator in five years (see also *Keohokalole*, Resolution of Investigation 2022-1, available at

<https://files.hawaii.gov/ethics/advice/ROI2022-1.pdf>). The Commission reiterated that state employees and legislators are held to a higher standard and that such violations should not occur. The Commission cautioned that any future violations would likely result in a substantially higher administrative penalty.

Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc.

The Commission also resolved an investigation involving Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc. (“Hawaiian Electric”) for failing to register certain employees as lobbyists and report their lobbying expenditures as required under Hawai‘i’s Lobbyists Law (HRS Chapter 97). While Hawaiian Electric had reported extensive lobbying activity, Commission staff identified additional employees who submitted testimony advocating on behalf of the company without registering as lobbyists.

Hawaiian Electric cooperated with the Commission’s review. After discussions with staff, the company registered previously unreported lobbyists, filed amended expenditure reports for 2023, 2024, and 2025, and ensured that the affected employees completed mandatory ethics training. The amended filings increased Hawaiian Electric’s reported lobbying compensation by \$5,485.86 in 2023, \$13,598.61 in 2024, and \$11,790.18 in 2025.

To resolve the matter, Hawaiian Electric agreed to pay a \$10,000 administrative penalty. The *Settlement of Investigation 2025-3*, available at <https://files.hawaii.gov/ethics/advice/SOI2025-3.pdf>. The company also affirmed that no portion of the penalty will be passed on to utility ratepayers.

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About the Hawai‘i State Ethics Commission:

The Hawai‘i State Ethics Commission is an independent state 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.