

views & voices

OUR VIEW

NONPROFITS

Use full vetting for grants in aid

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It's easy, though, to see why they keep trying: Politicians look good if they're able to secure large sums of taxpayer money for constituent causes. In the current fiscal year ending June 30, the Council tacked on \$2.16 million for 23 agencies — only \$100,000, though, will likely be released — above the \$6.1 million already set aside through the standard grants-in-aid process.

That grants process is the result of a Honolulu City Charter amendment approved by voters in 2012 that sets aside for nonprofit groups one-half of 1 percent of all city general fund collections. With it comes a thorough vetting process by the seven-member Grants in Aid Advisory Commission — and a grant limit of \$125,000 per request.

As a matter of principle, the Council should ensure all nonprofit grants be submitted for vetting by the advisory commission rather than inserted into the city's operating budget as pet projects.

This year, the commission received 98 applications from nonprofits and 58 were awarded grants for fiscal year 2017, totaling \$6.19 million. The worthy groups include the Blood Bank of Hawaii, the Boy Scouts of America Aloha Council and Special Olympics Hawaii.

Still, the Council felt compelled to add another \$2.35 million for 20 organizations, one of which had already been awarded funding through the formal grants-in-aid method.

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lieves the additional funding takes away from core city services — against the City Council. Ultimately, it becomes just another political fight between the city's administration and legislative branches that the public can do without.

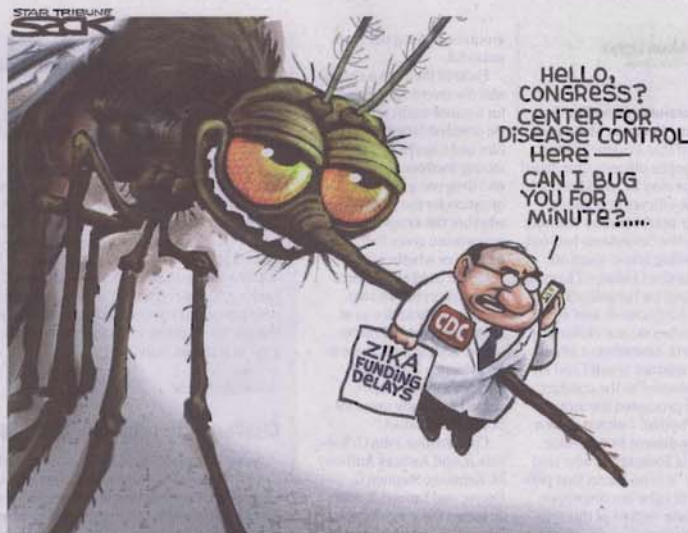
Council Chairman Ernie Martin said the add-ons are justified, saying the one-half of 1 percent was meant to be a minimum amount for nonprofits, not a ceiling. But that doesn't explain, or does it justify, why some nonprofits must undergo intense vetting while others do not.

Martin said Council members individually consider requests made by nonprofit agencies and submit an amendment for consideration to the Budget Committee. However, nonprofits applying for funds through the grants-in-aid process have their applications heavily scrutinized over several months, and the commission approves or denies the grant based on a detailed scoring system.

There needs to be a level playing field among the nonprofits. To underscore his opposition, Caldwell has refused to release the money for nearly all of the Council add-ons for nonprofits over the past few years. Yet the Council continues this exercise in futility.

We'd prefer that the City Council serve as the taxpayers' watchdog of sorts. Instead, its members are carving out exceptions when it serves their interests and skirting the prescribed application process.

There is no room for arbitrarily showering nonprofits with taxpayer money that should go toward public safety or road repaving. Although \$2.35 million in add-ons amount to a small fraction of the city's \$2.33 billion operating budget, those millions amount to a circumvention of a proper process that the public expects for accountability.



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Falls of Clyde could be safely relocated

I support an appeal of the state Department of Transportation decision to evict the Falls of Clyde from its moorings ("The fall of Clyde," Star-Advertiser, June 18). The unique historical value of the ship mandates that it be preserved.

Yes, the fundraising has been slow, but moving it solves nothing other than creating space for yet another commercial venture. It will cost far less than \$32 million to restore the hull to a point when it could safely be moved.

There has been no demonstration of a "safety and security risk" by the DOT.

There will be a huge taxpayer cost to move it in its present condition.

And speaking of risk to the harbor — what about the risk as it disintegrates, spreading debris into the path of harbor traffic? I implore the DOT to reverse its decision and save this treasure.

Harry Palmer
Downtown Honolulu

Students' behavior was disrespectful

Lailana Wong in his weekly Hawaiian language post praised the Kamehameha Schools students for not standing while the "Star Spangled Banner" was played.

Do the students and Wong not understand or teach simple respect? When I am in any foreign country, if their national anthem is played, it is pono to the people of that country, however different and disagreeable their government is, to stand while their anthem is played. By "noho pa'a" (stuck sitting), the students are disrespecting every graduate of that institution and everyone who has served in the military and those who have given their lives for their freedom, and are snubbing their noses at all non-Hawaiians.

If they truly feel this way, Wong should not accept any non-Native Hawaiian taxpayer monies included in his salary or retirement and the graduates of this school should not accept

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While the mayor and City Council promoted the urban development corridor from Kapolei to Honolulu that had given the green light to more than 20,000 future homes at Ho'opili and Koa Ridge, and a surge in condo tower construction around Kakaako and Ward Center, the Middle Street compromise will now add a bottleneck train/bus terminal to make commuting miserable for the thousands of workers who support the Honolulu economy.

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Kapolei

Have rail stop at edge of Chinatown

If we have to stop the rail short, let's stop it somewhere useful.

It was originally supposed to serve the Ala Moana Center. That may be out of reach, but downtown is not. A terminal stop on the Ewa edge of Chinatown (say, Beretania and River streets) would serve not only Chinatown but would be an easy walk (or a relatively quick bus ride) to downtown. And it wouldn't desecrate the downtown waterfront, as the current route plan would.

Pushing the line through Kalihi wouldn't be cheap or easy. But it would add real value. Stopping at Middle Street would not. If that's the preferred option, let's stop where we are now, in

Florida incident was attack on humanity

The tragic shooting incident in a gay nightclub in Orlando, Fla., was an act of terrorism and a hate crime committed by a self-radicalized jihadist, not only against innocent gay people but against humanity.

It is time to raise awareness about nonviolence, and the fight against terrorism, which is spreading like cancer across the globe.

The extremists are using the internet to recruit young, unstable individuals prone to violence, and brainwashing them to become jihadists to carry out attacks and suicide missions in crowded areas in their local communities. These fanatics have twisted certain passages of the Quran for their own selfish purposes to stay in power, create fear, and impose their rules on the entire world.

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Circuit Court Judge Rhonda Nishimura faulted the advisory opinion for being issued after deadline and said it is subject to formal rulemaking. But in this case, the opinion was what prompted a new policy for how school-related trips and those that are strictly supplemental should be arranged. Let's hope the BOE doesn't abandon what seems to be an improvement in policy.

Let adoptees see their adoption records

Adoptees shouldn't have to wait until their biological parents die to learn their identities, which was the case with Jeffery Guillemette, who was given up for adoption in 1951. Obstacles in Hawaii law related to the release of adoption records made it too costly and risky to learn his mother's identity while she was still alive.

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Beau Shell
Haleiwa

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Guillemette asked lawmakers for help, and this year the state Legislature passed House Bill 2082, which would give adoptees who are at least 18 years old unrestricted access to their adoption records — a step that about 15 other states have taken. Gov. David Ige should sign HB 2082 into law.

Guillemette only recently learned the identities of his birth parents, and this month he visited his mother's gravesite at Punchbowl Cemetery.

Barney & Clyde >> By Gene Weingarten

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