

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING
Thursday, August 21, 2008
Hanalei Elementary School Cafeteria**

**American Library Association's National Library Legislative Day
By Lani Kawahara, Library Manager, Kapaa Public Library**

On May 13th and 14th, State Librarian Richard Burns and I went to Washington, DC to thank Hawaii's Congressional delegation for their past support of libraries and to urge them to continue to support Hawaii State Public Library System's (HSPLS) legislative priorities. HSPLS priorities include increasing Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds and e-rate discounts.

For the 2009 FY, the support of our Senators and Representatives on Capitol Hill would translate into \$1.2M of LSTA funds (an increase of over \$100,000) and \$160,000 of e-rate discounts for the HSPLS. HSPLS' presence and our advocacy on Capitol Hill during the legislative session are crucial if HSPLS is to keep up with technological advances and maintain access to both online databases and the World Wide Web.

By personally visiting Hawaii's Congressional officials, we were able to educate legislators and their staff about HSPLS' needs and offer a personal, specific message relevant to each legislator.

For example, we were able to connect on a personal level with Representative Mazie Hirono because one of her staff was from Kauai and we commiserated together about the horrible traffic situation in Kapaa town. Representative Hirono said she still remembers her elementary school librarian and how that librarian instilled in her the love of learning. We were able to emphasize to her the importance of LSTA funds and e-rate discounts in our mission to support life long learning in the communities she represents. We were also able to point out how important those funds are when we factor in Hawaii's relative isolation and the power of technology and the internet to connect with Hawaii to the mainland and with neighbor islands. Both Representative Hirono and her staff members will remember us and our very specific requests and detailed discussions.

Our visit with Senator Daniel Akaka revealed a mischievous, sharp and gracious gentleman with strong positive memories about libraries and the Hawaii of the 1930s. We asked him to continue to support LSTA funding and e-rate discount so libraries could continue to positively affect people's lives just as they had his. He then excitedly showed us his specially created "READ" poster, with him holding his favorite book. He so wanted to visit with us, he had arranged for his staff to call him on the Senate floor so he would know we had arrived at his office.

We were also able to meet with staff members in the offices of Senator Daniel Inouye and Representative Neil Abercrombie to convey our message to them.

By participating in the American Library Association's (ALA) National Library Legislative Day, we are able to establish ongoing contact and relationships with our Congressional officials and staff members. HSPLS can only improve its chances of being heard, understood and remembered when library funding comes up during legislative sessions. Library leaders are able to make their case personally for funds and emphasize with specific examples the importance of Hawaii's public libraries. Additionally, ALA's program provides a unified and effective *nationwide* campaign for all libraries.