



**Representative
Lauren
Matsumoto
Serving You in District 45**

Aloha friends and neighbors!

Surfing, as many would say, is Hawaii's gift to the world. This week, I honored Hawaii's female surfers on the floor of the House of Representatives. At a time when female surfers from Hawaii are breaking records around the world in every kind of surfing event, it's more important than ever to fight for equality and female representation in competitive surfing.

This week we honored many surfers and advocates for their achievements: Carissa Moore (her family was there to accept the certificate on her behalf), Honolua Blomfield, Sabrina Brennan, Paige Alms, Keala Kennelly, "Banzai" Betty Depolito, and Carol Phillips. Many of you already know these women and their accomplishments but I wanted to publicly acknowledge their contributions towards moving women's surfing forward.

Carissa Moore is a Honolulu local, is a four-time World Champion, and is ranked number one in the world. At age 18, she became the youngest person, male or female, to win a surfing world title and was the first woman to compete in the Triple Crown of Surfing. This year, she'll be representing the United States at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Honolua Blomfield started surfing when she was only two years old. A native of Haleiwa, she competed in her first surf competition, the Menehune Surf Contest at four years old. Since then she has become a master longboarder. She recently became the World Longboard Champion for the second time!

Sabrina Brennan is a political advocate for the inclusion of women in big wave surf competitions. She is a champion for female surfers everywhere, co-founding the Committee for Equity in Women's Surfing that has led the charge for equality, inclusion, equal access, and pay parity in professional surfing.

Paige Alms is a self-taught and self-motivated big wave surfer from Maui. Her first big wave session at the age of 15 had her hooked. She worked as many jobs as she could to pay for her gear and travel expenses so she could compete in surf tours. The hard work paid off: Paige is a two-time Big Wave World Champion surfer and will be competing in the Olympics this summer in Tokyo.

Keala Kennelly is a professional surfer from Kauai who began competing professionally at the age of 17 and quickly rose to the top of the ranks as one of the best female surfers in the world. She spent a decade ranked in the top ten of the ASP World Championship Tour winning accolades, setting records, and making history for female surfing. She is known for charging big waves and was the 2018-2019 Big Wave World Champion.

Banzai Betty Depolito has made an impact surfing big waves on the North Shore since 1979. The California West Coast Champion traveled the world as a top ten rated international surfer. She's been a force behind pushing women's surfing to a new level and is leaving a legacy as big as the waves she's surfed. Her work promoting female athletes is helping to lay the groundwork for female surfers to continue breaking records around the world. She most recently saw victory in Honolulu City Council resolution 20-12 which urged the Department of Land and Natural Resources to adjust permit rules to allow more women to compete.

Finally, we also honored Carol Phillips. At the age of 14 on the North Shore, she discovered bodyboarding and fell in love with surfing Hawaii's big waves. She was the first woman to compete against men at the Banzai Pipeline and she founded the World Championship of Women's Bodyboarding. The competition was the first of its kind and is the longest running women's wave sport event in the world. She also continues to invest in our local community and currently serves on the North Shore Neighborhood Board always advocating for women's surfing.

It was the legislature's pleasure to honor each of these champions. Women's surfing has come a long way thanks to the hard work of these women and women like them. But there's still more work to do to ensure women have the same opportunities as men in competitive surfing. Women like these will continue paving the way for future generations of girls to get on their boards and rise in confidence to take on the world. Surfing is a gift that has been shared for generations around the world. Now with women rising up to an equal position in the professional surfing world, we look forward to all they will accomplish in the future.

As always, please don't hesitate to contact my office if you have any questions or concerns about happenings in our community. You can reach me at (808) 586-9490 or at repmatsumoto@capitol.hawaii.gov.