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Tea Partiers Send Message

Protesters gather at Capitol to demand cuts in government spending

By [Gordon Y.K. Pang](#)
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Holding the line on taxes was the common message that about 1,000 Hawai'i residents sent to lawmakers at yesterday's second annual Hawaii Tax Day Tea Party at the State Capitol.

Those in attendance were from varying ages and backgrounds.

"I'm just the average taxpayer who's saying we've got too much government and let's not keep spending," said Thomas Peterson, 51, of Diamond Head. Peterson was holding up a sign along Beretania Street that said, "Do the Math, Less Gov't = Less Taxes."

Keith Sasaki, 46, of Waikī said the best example of unwise spending is the health care reform bill passed by Congress last month.

"I'm all for helping other people, but in a voluntary manner," Sasaki said. "When things are shoved down my throat, I don't feel comfortable about it."

favors privatizing

East Honolulu resident Sharon Shimono, who's in her 50s, said state lawmakers have not been looking at cutting costs at all. Asked to give an example of how savings could be achieved, Shimono and husband Michael Miller suggested transferring more government functions to the private sector.

"They need to look at the cost benefits of privatizing," Shimono said. "They won't even look at it. The size of government is growing much too quickly."

Peniel Educational Ministries student Gavin Klein, 17, waved a large U.S. flag during the string of speeches. Klein said he is studying U.S. civics.

"If we don't get involved, we lose our freedoms," said Klein, of Pearl City. "Government is trying to pass laws that tax those who earn money to give it to those who have been idle."

Mike Watts, 52, of Mililani wore a T-shirt that he purchased from event organizers that said "Revolution is Brewing."

"When we say revolution, we don't mean guns or anything like that," Watts said. "In this case, it's about taxes. We want them to spend them the way we want to spend them."

For example, Watts said, "We're spending money on welfare and it doesn't seem to be making a difference."

There were other messages being spread yesterday , with disagreement over some of them.

various candidates

A number of candidates set up booths, among them GOP Congressional candidate Charles Djou, nonpartisan Honolulu mayoral candidate Panos Prevedouros and state Senate and House candidates, most of them Republicans.

The Hawaii Republican Party Assembly, which bills itself as "the Republican Wing of the Republican Party" was on hand, as well as the Libertarian Party of Hawaii.

A man, who would only identify himself as "Jay," carried a sign that said on one side "Deport Obama the Muslim."

He was confronted by Ed Letourneau, 66, of Mō'ili'ili. "That's not what we're about," Letourneau told Jay. "That's hate speech."

Asked by The Advertiser to clarify his objections, Letourneau said, "We're here about big government, big taxes."

Others in attendance tried to dissuade The Advertiser from speaking to Jay, saying he did not represent their views.

But Waikīkī resident Keith Hollman, 47, said he didn't see the fuss. Hollman said he supported the other side of Jay's sign that read "Deport Illegals, Close Borders, Put America Back To Work."

The Obama sign "is a little rash," Hollman said. "I think the guy was trying draw attention. But we're here to express ourselves."

Jay declined to talk to The Advertiser.

Human services

An advocate for the human services community who walked by the gathering said he disagrees with the message being sent.

Alex Santiago, executive director of PHOCUSED (Protecting Hawai'i's Ohana, Children, Underserved, Elderly and Disabled), said "with the state we're in right now financially, I just don't know what other alternatives the legislators really have other than to look at revenue-generation at this time."

Economists have told lawmakers that there can't be enough savings from cuts to the state general fund to be able to stave off tax increases, he said.

"There's not a whole lot of alternatives left," said Santiago, a former state representative from O'ahu's North Shore. "I'm very concerned that essential services have been cut and may be cut even further."

But Mākaha resident James Wallace, 37, said he showed up at the rally because he feels exactly the opposite.

"Right now, we're in hard times and we're struggling," Wallace said. "Raising taxes is not the answer. It's important for people to speak out against the socialists and big government."

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