

#125

COMPLETE

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Page 1: Candidate Information

**Q1**

Office You are Seeking

STATE SENATE DISTRICT 5

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**Q2**

Party

DEMOCRATIC

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**Q3**

First Name

GILBERT

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**Q4**

Last Name

KEITH-AGARAN

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**Q5**

Email

FRIENDSOFGILKEITHAGARAN@GMAIL.COM

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**Q6**

Phone

(808) 242-4049

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**Q7**

Campaign Website

GILKEITHAGARAN.COM

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Page 2: COVID-19 Response and Recovery

Q8

What steps do you think our state and/or counties should take to aid this recovery? Some examples could include how you think federal funds should be spent, diversifying the state's economy, etc.

The Governor's and Mayors' conservative approach and most residents complying with physical distancing orders and recommendations successfully kept the number of cases and deaths in Hawaii low. Given the uncertainties surrounding COVID-19, the Governor's reliance on the State epidemiologist and her Department of Health (DOH) staff is understandable.

For residents, however, the Lt. Governor demonstrated better communication instincts, understanding a need to balance DOH's (and CDC's) risk-adverse recommendations and guidelines with the inherent economic, social and political impacts. People want and expect clear, consistent information during an emergency. Unclear messages regarding testing's role and importance (whether based on limited testing resources or basic public health principles) undoubtedly raised questions regarding risks posed by asymptomatic but contagious residents continuing to interact with their families and co-workers.

The Governor should make clear that any proposed opening does not remove the current 14-day quarantine but only provides a narrow exemption for visitors who choose to comply with the proposed testing regime; the Mayors (and the County police) will need to show that the quarantine is being enforced. The Governor should also point out that the quarantine policy did succeed in discouraging a large number of potential visitors (the daily arrivals dropped from approximately 30,000 to less than a 1,000).

Maui must re-open its local economy, including tourism sooner rather than later but with proper precautions in place to meet possible Covid-19 resurgence. Maui Nui (without substantial military investments or presence as an additional leg of its economic stool) remains more dependent on the visitor industry than other counties.

I support prioritizing visitors from "travel bubbles"—countries and mainland regions which have addressed the pandemic well (i.e., Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Australia).

An expected initial reluctance to travel also gives Maui an opportunity to plan tourism (as reported, spending from 10million tourists in recent years only equals revenue from a smaller and more manageable visitor number decades ago) that better balances impacts on our local population, infrastructure and natural environment. One of the measures under consideration remains some kind of "green fee" to charge all visitors that would be invested to mitigate the impacts of tourism on local communities and resources.

SB75 HD1 includes funding for thermal scanner equipment at airports as another tool for detecting possible cases and supporting contact tracing efforts. However, development of quick tests or requiring some kind of passenger pre-clearance (working with Hawaii's Congressional delegation and federal authorities) should also be pursued.

We're an island state. Climate Change is the most important issue. Global warming is already happening. More hurricanes, drought followed by sudden storms and rising sea levels are all going to change Hawaii in ways that will impact and change the quality of life for all our residents.

Government should implement the Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission recommendations. All County planning, especially in coastal areas, should incorporate climate change considerations. The State and Counties should also lead by example in moving key public infrastructure (roadways, water and wastewater reclamation facilities and utility plants) mauka of vulnerable coastal areas for managed retreat.

Using carbon tax and/or green tax revenues, Hawaii could implement WPA-like initiatives for island residents displaced from their pre-pandemic jobs for various public works projects (including addressing the backlog of repair and maintenance of existing university, public school and other office facilities and buildings), and reforestation as mitigation for the state's carbon footprint.

Diversification has been a long-standing concern that the pandemic only bluntly highlights. We should support economic development promoting self-sufficiency. Funding should be invested in workforce development advancing Hawaii's own resiliency—for example, health care. Maui Health System (MHS) now hires nurses directly from the University of Hawaii Maui College (UHMC) and takes on their training on the job (the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation generally required nurses to get experience elsewhere and consequently contracted traveling nurses—new UHMC graduates needed to move off island for training without any assurance they would return). MHS is also looking for local medical technicians to reduce the number of off-island contractors, working with UHMC to

develop a program or to partner with Kapiolani Community College. This year, one of the legislative priorities for the John A. Burns School of Medicine was medical education and training on the Valley Isle. In connection with Mahi Pono's agricultural activities, the State should support UHMC and the Farm Bureau/Farmers Union efforts to develop value-added products from the crops. Finally, we should build on the growing number of solar, wind and other alternative energy projects to develop, adopt and market the technologies required to grow local opportunities.

But the visitor industry in the short-term will continue to provide the broadest number of jobs at not just accommodations but all the vendors, services and activities that cater to visitors.

With the end of the year deadline to spend federal CARES money, the allocations of the CARES funding has been directed at specific areas where programs have already been set up -- i.e., augmenting UI with an additional \$100 in benefits to partially make up the \$600 provided by the federal government but which will end in July, allocating funding to provide rent supports through the end of the year for certain qualifying residents, directing resources for various food-related programs (including money to DHS to assist in expanding SNAP enrollment), and grants for local manufacturing of items like personal protective equipment, sanitizer and other things that will support Hawaii's local resilience.

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**Q9**

Please share some of the efforts you have led or participated in response to COVID-19.

I've worked with the Senate leadership in providing input to the work of the Senate COVID-19 special committee in oversight of the administration's response. Throughout the last four months, the Maui legislative delegation has been working with the Mayor and his administrators to monitor local efforts in providing assistance to residents who have been laid off or furloughed, participating in food distributions in our different communities with the County organized partnerships with the local Maui Farm Bureau and Farmers Union chapters, and different community groups. In any emergency, elected officials should understand the most effective way to assist the first responders and others delegated to provide services. My office has been responding to constituents encountering trouble with the State UI and the new PUA systems.

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**Q10**

Respondent skipped this question

Additional thoughts/comments:

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Page 3: Tobacco and E-Cigarette Regulations

**Q11**

What policies do you think the state and/or counties should enact to reduce tobacco and e-cigarette use?

I have been supportive of the efforts of Sen. Roz Baker, public health advocates and the community groups working on educational efforts and legislative directives.

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**Q12**

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

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|---|----------------|
| Apply a tobacco tax to e-cigarettes, such as a percentage of the wholesale cost or taxing e-liquid by volume. | <b>Support</b> |
| Prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes and flavored e-liquids.      | <b>Support</b> |
| Increase the tobacco tax on cigarettes to help smokers quit and prevent new users from starting.              | <b>Oppose</b>  |
| Funds from the tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes should fund tobacco prevention and cessation efforts.     | <b>Support</b> |
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**Q13**

**Respondent skipped this question**

Additional thoughts/comments:

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Page 4: Healthy Eating + Active Living

**Q14**

What steps do you think the state and/or counties should take to ensure food security for all of Hawaii's people, and to significantly increase food self-sufficiency for our state?

The State should ensure that farmers have the land, water and other materials they need to make a living in growing food for local consumption, including putting more teeth in the purchasing preferences for local produce and protein sources and support where needed to meet public health requirements for processing agricultural products.

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**Q15**

In 2019, Hawai'i made a commitment to adopt Vision Zero, an initiative to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. What policies and infrastructure changes should the state and/or counties make to achieve this goal?

Hawaii needs to review the proposals in the initiative to reassess whether changes will be required in light of the implications of the pandemic (i.e., mass transit which would have been a boon in many ways for providing more equitable transportation from residences to workplaces will need to account for the social distancing required until a vaccine or other measures are identified and implemented).

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**Q16**

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

We must significantly increase public investment in food systems workforce development, including programs such as farm to school, agriculture and food systems education (PreK-12 and higher education), and farmer training programs. **Support**

The state should continue to invest in a Double Up Food Bucks program, which doubles the value of SNAP benefits when buying fresh, locally grown produce at participating retailers. **Support**

Enact a one-cent per-ounce fee on sugar-sweetened beverages. **Oppose**

Use revenue from a sugar-sweetened beverage fee for obesity prevention programs. **Oppose**

Make health and physical education (PE) courses a curriculum requirement, rather than an option, for middle school students. PE is currently a requirement for elementary and high school students. **Oppose**

Implement a red light camera program to deter red-light running and help curb traffic fatalities and injuries. **Support**

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**Q17**

Respondent skipped this question

Additional thoughts/comments:

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Page 5: Oral Health

**Q18**

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

Reinstate coverage of preventative dental benefits for Adult Medicaid participants. **Support**

Fluoridation of community water supplies is an effective way to prevent tooth decay. **Support**

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**Q19**

Respondent skipped this question

Additional thoughts/comments:

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Page 6: Alcohol Regulations

**Q20**

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

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|---|----------------|
| Increase in alcohol taxes.  | <b>Oppose</b>  |
| Repeal of the alcohol takeout laws that allow people to buy and take home liquor-based mixed drinks from restaurants.                       | <b>Oppose</b>  |
| Repeal of alcohol delivery laws that allow restaurants to deliver beer and liquor-based mixed drinks to people's homes.                     | <b>Oppose</b>  |
| Increase in enforcement that helps ensure that youth do not access alcohol through existing laws allowing for alcohol takeout and delivery. | <b>Support</b> |
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**Q21**

**Respondent skipped this question**

Additional thoughts/comments:

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Page 7: Marijuana Regulations

**Q22**

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Do you support legalizing recreational marijuana sales in Hawai'i?  | <b>Support</b> |
| If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that marijuana be regulated by the Department of Health?              | <b>Oppose</b>  |
| If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that the price of marijuana be regulated?                             | <b>Oppose</b>  |
| If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that the promotion and advertisement of marijuana sales be regulated? | <b>Support</b> |
| If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that marijuana potency be regulated?                                  | <b>Support</b> |
| If recreational marijuana is formally proposed by the state, how strongly would you support that the number and placement of marijuana outlets be regulated?      | <b>Support</b> |
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**Q23**

**Respondent skipped this question**

Additional thoughts/comments:

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Page 8: Economic Justice

**Q24**

What are your immediate plans to help make Hawai'i more affordable for its residents?

Like most legislators, I agreed with the joint legislative package of bills aimed at addressing the cost of living in our State by improving access to child care/early learning, making housing more in reach of working families, and providing tax and wage changes. Due to the pandemic, the package to make the EITC refundable and to gradually raise the minimum wage fell to the wayside but the legislature did pass two of the four package bills-- providing resources to expand Open Doors and provide classrooms at existing university and libraries for preschool classes, and creating an agency dedicated to construction, repair and maintenance of school facilities. While the housing omnibus proposal also did not survive, with my counterpart in the State House -- Rep. Kyle Yamashita who also leads the review of state public works funding, I help include infrastructure investments for housing developments throughout the State, providing a direct subsidy for homes that will be sold (the State and Counties provide a number of direct subsidy programs for rental projects). I am also working with community groups and advocates about a possible public-private partnership to identify pre-school expansion opportunities in Central Maui.

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**Q25**

What is the role of government in addressing housing affordability issues and what would you do to encourage the production of more affordable homes for Hawai'i residents?

The Governor and the Mayors need to lead in clearing the way for constructing residential units--both for rent and for sale-- understanding that there will be opposition due to the tradeoffs for any additional development-- whether in terms of infrastructure challenges or changes to the fabric of existing communities or density of a development or other issues that will arise. The traditional car-oriented layout of new communities also needs to shift (keeping in mind the new realities that must be addressed due to the pandemic). With affordable for sale units left in recent decades to be subsidized by market units in a development, few units have been made available to working families in the gap between those qualified for so-called workforce housing units and those who can truly afford the market units. As noted, the State for the first time is investing in providing some infrastructure in support of housing which addresses one cost cited by private developers-- the question will be whether developers use the savings to provide more affordable units for the gap group or just pocket the difference.

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**Q26**

Please indicate your position on the following policies:

Increase the state's minimum wage in a series of annual steps to a living wage of \$17 per hour. **Support**

Create a statewide Paid Family Leave Program, which would allow up to 12 weeks for employees to provide care for a newborn, bond with a new child, or care for a family member with a serious health condition. **Support**

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**Q27**

**Respondent skipped this question**

Additional thoughts/comments:

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