

## **Hawaii State Democratic Party Convention Resolution** (adopted May 24, 2008)

### **BUSIN 08-12 RESOLUTION CALLING FOR TRUTH-IN-LABELING FOR KONA COFFEE**

**WHEREAS**, the unique climatic and soil conditions of the Kona region on the Island of Hawai'i are ideal for the cultivation of coffee; and

**WHEREAS**, the care, skill and cultivation practices of Kona coffee farmers, most of whom operate small family-owned farms, have resulted in recognition of Kona coffee as one of the world's premier specialty coffees; and

**WHEREAS**, existing Hawai'i statutes allow unfair and deceptive business practices which are used to deceive consumers into believing that packages containing 90% foreign coffee are "Kona coffee"--thereby damaging the reputation for quality which Kona coffee farmers have built over generations of growing this heritage crop; and

**WHEREAS**, by way of example, HRS 486-120.6 permits the use of the "Kona" name on packaging of a coffee blend having as little as 10% coffee from Kona and 90% coffee from unidentified foreign countries; and

**WHEREAS**, by way of further example, in their December 2004 edition the writers of Consumer Reports confused "Kona coffee blends" with "Kona coffee" and concluded that Kona coffee can be "second rate" on the basis of a mistaken belief that "Kona blends" are "Kona coffee"; and

**WHEREAS**, the State of Hawai'i should provide the same type of protections to its specialty crop farmers, specifically including Kona coffee farmers, as the State of California has provided to Napa Valley grape growers in Cal. Bus. and Prof. Code, Section 25241 ("Napa Truth-in-Labeling law"); and

**WHEREAS**, the State Legislature made a factual finding in Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 102 (2007) that "existing labeling requirements for Kona coffee causes consumer fraud and confusion and degrades the 'Kona Coffee' name"; and

**WHEREAS**, no other region anywhere in the world (other than Hawai'i) permits the use of the name of one of its specialty agricultural crops with as little as 50% (let alone 10%) genuine content; and

**WHEREAS**, the Hawai'i County Council has adopted two resolutions (Resolution No. 18-06 of December 20, 2006, and Resolution 417-07 of November 20, 2007) requesting the Legislature to amend current law to require any coffee labeled "Kona Coffee Blend" to have a minimum 75% Kona Coffee; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2006 Hawai'i County Democratic Party Convention (Resolutions # 06-02, May 6, 2006) and the 2006 Hawai'i State Democratic Convention (Resolution # 37, May 26, 2006) both adopted resolutions urging state legislators to amend HRS 486-120.6 to end the damage being done to the Kona coffee reputation by deceptive labeling and business practices; and

**WHEREAS**, ignoring the requests of Kona's coffee farmers, the requests of the Hawai'i County Council, the request of the Hawai'i County Democratic Party, and the request of the Hawai'i State Democratic Party, the State Legislature in the last 3 legislative sessions has failed to provide a single committee hearing for open and democratic consideration of pending bills for Truth-in-Labeling for Kona coffee;

**WHEREAS**, the Hawai'i County Democrats express their deep disappointment in the State Legislature's failure in the last 3 sessions to provide committee hearings for, and failure to enact, pending Truth-in-Labeling bills for Kona coffee; and

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Democratic Party of Hawai'i urges the State Legislature to support Kona's coffee farmers by introducing and vigorously working for adoption of Truth-in-Labeling legislation for Kona coffee and prominent identification on labels of the country or region of origin of the non-Kona portion in such blends; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Democratic Party of Hawai'i urges the State Legislature to enact, in the 2009 legislative session, Truth-in-Labeling legislation as described in the preceding paragraph.