

BUS/AG 2016-03 Calling for Truthful Labeling of Hawai'i-Grown Coffee

Whereas, Hawai'i is the ONLY REGION ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD to permit the use of its regional names in labeling one of its heritage crops (coffee) with only 10% genuine content; and

Whereas, The unique climatic and soil conditions of Hawai'i are ideal for cultivation of coffee; and

Whereas, The care, skill and cultivation practices of Hawai'i coffee farmers, most of whom operate small family-owned farms, have resulted in recognition of Hawaii's coffees as among the world's premier specialty coffees; and

Whereas, Existing Hawai'i statutes allow consumers to be misled into believing that packages containing 90% foreign-grown coffee are Hawai'i-grown coffee—thereby damaging the reputation for quality which Hawai'i coffee farmers have built over generations; 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% Kona-grown coffee and 90% from unidentified foreign countries; and

Whereas, By way of further example, the writers of Consumers Reports in their review of Kona coffees confused "Kona Blends" with "Kona Coffee" and concluded that Kona coffee can be "second rate" on the basis of this common 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 as California provides to Napa Valley grape growers, as Idaho provides to Idaho potato farmers, and as Georgia provides to Vidalia onion farmers: and

Whereas, The Hawai'i Legislature made a factual finding in Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 102 (2007) that "existing labeling requirements for Kona coffee causes fraud and confusion and degrades the 'Kona coffee' name"; and

Whereas, The Hawai'i County Council in October 2014 unanimously adopted Resolution No. 501-14 asking that the Legislature enact legislation requiring a minimum of 51% genuine content for labeling or advertising blends of coffee grown in the State of Hawai'i and that the origin of all coffee in such blends be prominently identified on the label; now therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Democratic Party of Hawai'i rescind resolution BUS 2012-14, and replace it with the following: be it

Resolved, That the Democratic Party of Hawai'i requests that the members of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i in the State Legislature introduce and vigorously work for the adoption of the legislative reforms to HRS 486-120.6 requested in Hawai'i County Council Resolution No. 501-14 requiring a minimum of 51% genuine content for labeling or advertising blends of coffee grown in the State of Hawai'i and that the origin of all coffee in such blends be prominently and clearly identified on the primary display panel of the label; and be it further

Resolved, That this legislation be included in the Democratic Party's "2017 Legislative Package" and that the Department of Agriculture and all members of the Democratic delegation in the State Legislature vigorously support the adoption of this legislation; and be it further

Ordered, That copies of this Resolution be transmitted to each Democratic Party member of the State Legislature, the Department of Agriculture Chair and Governor of the State of Hawai'i.