



## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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REPRESENTATIVE BEV HARBIN

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### **REPRESENTATIVE BEV HARBIN FILES SUIT AGAINST HONOLULU LIQUOR COMMISSION Failure To Follow State Law and Its Own Rules In Issuing Questionable License Cited**

**HONOLULU: SEPTEMBER 13, 2006** — Representative Bev Harbin has filed a lawsuit against the Honolulu Liquor Commission and the City and County of Honolulu following the approval of a questionable liquor license in the Sheridan-Keeaumoku area of her District 28. Harbin said, "I'm disturbed that the Liquor Commission failed to follow its own rules and Hawai'i state law. I've heard the frustration coming from the this area with its heavy concentration of bars and strip clubs, and I intend to put a stop to the irregular way in which some of these City & County licenses are being issued. Something's very wrong here." Harbin noted that the circumstances leading up to her filing the law suit "...constitute one of the more-egregious actions by a government agency that I've ever seen."

The hostess bar applicant failed to advise the Liquor Commission that they had not notified neighbors of their intent to indeed double the establishment's size by expanding into an adjacent hostess bar -- one that had been shut down by the liquor commission -- and that this expansion would also place it well-inside the minimum 500-foot distance from another bar as set by State Law. Harbin says, "There was obviously no inspection performed -- or if there was, the law and rules were ignored and my constituents deserve to know what occurred here and why. The Liquor Commission and attorneys for the hostess bar must now explain themselves in a court of law, but more importantly in the court of public opinion."

Harbin also observed, "Many hostess bars and clubs operating with Cabaret Licenses seem to feel that they do not owe the community an iota of respect in their business actions. If a business has a long string of citations or is found guilty of numerous violations, all that happens is a stock transfer to a friend or family member and they are back in business. The residents and other small business in the Sheridan-Keeaumoku area have asked and asked and asked again for support by the Liquor Commission in preventing underage drinking and underage servers in these questionable bars -- yet the illegal activities, drug problems, and related property crime continues to escalate."

Harbin continued, "It is my hope that with this law suit and many more that I plan to file on behalf of the residents and legal businesses in the Sheridan-Keeaumoku area, the Honolulu Liquor Commission will realize that they are the gatekeeper for the quality of life in Honolulu. My constituents are disenfranchised and scared to walk in on their own streets and they are losing a quality of life that we should protect and treasure in an old neighborhood like the Sheridan area. As I sit in the weekly hearings, I witness a reluctance to implement the law as enacted. I have observed the same four law firms defend the same hostess and cabaret bars and these lawyers know how to manipulate the system. These attorneys have a professional duty to follow the law, while providing sound legal advice to their clients. As a former small business owner and a small business advocate, I know that Hawaii's small business people work hard to be good neighbors. However, in the Sheridan-Keeaumoku area, there seems to be no penalty for disrespect, bad -- and many times illegal -- behavior under the guise operating a legal business." CONTACT REP. HARBIN FOR COMPLETE LAWSUIT FILING.