

P O S I T I O N P A P E R

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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I. STATEMENT OF POSITION

WE HAVE ONE PLANET. THAT IS NOT A RHETORICAL FLOURISH. IT IS THE DEFINING CONSTRAINT OF EVERY OTHER POLICY DECISION ANY GOVERNMENT WILL EVER MAKE. NO AMOUNT OF ECONOMIC GROWTH MATTERS IF WE DESTROY THE NATURAL SYSTEMS THAT SUSTAIN ALL LIFE. NO JOBS PROGRAM, NO INFRASTRUCTURE BILL, NO TAX CUT MEANS ANYTHING ON A DEAD PLANET.

FEDERAL POLICY MUST REFLECT THIS REALITY. I WILL FIGHT FOR STRONG ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS, INVESTMENT IN CLEAN ENERGY, AND THE REVERSAL OF EVERY ROLLBACK THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION HAS IMPOSED ON THE AGENCIES AND REGULATIONS THAT STAND BETWEEN US AND IRREVERSIBLE ECOLOGICAL HARM.

II. WHERE I COME FROM

I HAVE LIVED IN OCEAN VIEW ON THE BIG ISLAND OF HAWAI'I SINCE 2014. THE ECOLOGY HERE IS UNLIKE ANYWHERE ELSE ON EARTH. SPECIES THAT EXIST NOWHERE ELSE ON THE PLANET. CORAL REEFS. RAINFORESTS. VOLCANIC LANDSCAPES THAT ARE STILL ACTIVELY FORMING BENEATH OUR FEET. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE A SCIENTIST TO UNDERSTAND THAT THIS PLACE IS WORTH PROTECTING. YOU ONLY HAVE TO OPEN YOUR EYES.

WHAT I SEE INSTEAD FROM WASHINGTON IS A GOVERNMENT THAT TREATS THE ENVIRONMENT AS AN OBSTACLE TO PROFIT. THAT POSTURE IS NOT JUST SHORTSIGHTED. IT IS A BETRAYAL OF EVERY GENERATION THAT WILL COME AFTER US. IT HAS TO STOP.

III. THE FEDERAL RESPONSIBILITY

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IS NOT A STATE ISSUE. POLLUTION DOES NOT RESPECT STATE LINES. CLIMATE CHANGE DOES NOT CARE ABOUT CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS. THE OCEAN THAT SURROUNDS THESE ISLANDS CONNECTS US TO EVERY OTHER COASTLINE ON THE PLANET. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE REEF OFF KONA IS CONNECTED TO WHAT HAPPENS IN THE GULF OF MEXICO, THE SOUTH PACIFIC, AND THE ARCTIC.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS BOTH THE CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY AND THE MORAL OBLIGATION TO PROTECT WHAT ALL AMERICANS SHARE: CLEAN AIR, CLEAN WATER, A STABLE CLIMATE, AND FUNCTIONING ECOSYSTEMS. THESE ARE NOT LUXURIES. THEY ARE THE FOUNDATION OF EVERYTHING ELSE. YOU CANNOT RAISE HEALTHY CHILDREN BREATHING POISONED AIR. YOU CANNOT SUSTAIN AN AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY WITH DEPLETED SOIL AND

CONTAMINATED WATER. YOU CANNOT BUILD A TOURISM ECONOMY ON BLEACHED REEFS AND ERODED COASTLINES.

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION HAS SYSTEMATICALLY DISMANTLED THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, WITHDRAWN FROM INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE COMMITMENTS, REOPENED PROTECTED LANDS TO EXTRACTION, AND REVERSED RULES GOVERNING AIR AND WATER QUALITY THAT TOOK DECADES OF SCIENTIFIC WORK AND PUBLIC ADVOCACY TO ESTABLISH. THIS IS NOT DEREGULATION. IT IS DESTRUCTION. AND CONGRESS MUST ANSWER FOR ALLOWING IT.

IV. THE STAKES FOR HAWAI'I

THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS FACE ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES THAT ARE BOTH A PREVIEW OF WHAT THE REST OF THE NATION WILL EXPERIENCE AND A CRISIS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT:

- **SEA LEVEL RISE AND COASTAL EROSION THREATEN COMMUNITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND CULTURAL SITES ACROSS EVERY ISLAND IN THE CHAIN.**
- **CORAL BLEACHING DRIVEN BY OCEAN WARMING HAS DEVASTATED REEFS THAT TOOK THOUSANDS OF YEARS TO FORM AND THAT ENTIRE ECOSYSTEMS – AND FISHING INDUSTRIES – DEPEND UPON.**
- **INVASIVE SPECIES, ACCELERATED BY CLIMATE DISRUPTION AND INADEQUATE FEDERAL BIOSECURITY FUNDING, ARE DESTROYING NATIVE FORESTS AND THE ENDEMIC SPECIES THAT INHABIT THEM.**
- **FRESHWATER AVAILABILITY IS INCREASINGLY PRECARIOUS ON ISLANDS WHERE AQUIFER RECHARGE DEPENDS ON INTACT FOREST WATERSHEDS NOW UNDER THREAT.**
- **VOLCANIC EMISSIONS ON THE BIG ISLAND CREATE AIR QUALITY CHALLENGES THAT INTERSECT WITH FEDERAL CLEAN AIR POLICY IN WAYS THAT REQUIRE FEDERAL ENGAGEMENT, NOT FEDERAL INDIFFERENCE.**

V. WHAT I WILL FIGHT FOR

I WILL ADVOCATE FOR THE FOLLOWING IN CONGRESS:

- **FULL RESTORATION AND STRENGTHENING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY'S AUTHORITY, STAFFING, AND ENFORCEMENT CAPACITY – REVERSING EVERY CUT IMPOSED BY THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION.**
- **REJOINING AND STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE COMMITMENTS, INCLUDING BINDING EMISSIONS REDUCTION TARGETS WITH REAL ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS.**
- **FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN CLEAN ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE: SOLAR, WIND, GEOTHERMAL, AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES THAT CAN**

REPLACE FOSSIL FUEL DEPENDENCE WHILE CREATING GOOD-PAYING JOBS.

- **PROTECTION OF FEDERAL PUBLIC LANDS, MARINE SANCTUARIES, AND WILDERNESS AREAS FROM EXTRACTION, DEVELOPMENT, AND EXPLOITATION. WHAT IS PROTECTED MUST STAY PROTECTED.**
- **STRENGTHENED CLEAN AIR ACT AND CLEAN WATER ACT ENFORCEMENT, WITH PENALTIES THAT ACTUALLY DETER VIOLATIONS RATHER THAN BEING TREATED AS A COST OF DOING BUSINESS.**
- **CLIMATE RESILIENCE FUNDING FOR COASTAL COMMUNITIES, WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO ISLAND STATES AND TERRITORIES THAT FACE EXISTENTIAL RISK FROM SEA LEVEL RISE.**
- **OPPOSITION TO ANY LEGISLATION – FROM ANY PARTY – THAT TRADES OUR CHILDREN’S FUTURE FOR SHORT-TERM PROFIT MARGINS OR CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS FROM EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES.**

VI. THE BOTTOM LINE

ONE PLANET. THAT IS ALL WE GET. I INTEND TO FIGHT FOR IT LIKE OUR GRANDCHILDREN’S LIVES DEPEND ON IT – BECAUSE THEY DO. THE ENVIRONMENT IS NOT ONE ISSUE AMONG MANY. IT IS THE CONDITION UNDER WHICH ALL OTHER ISSUES EXIST. A CONGRESS THAT FAILS TO PROTECT IT HAS FAILED AT THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL.

I HAVE WATCHED THE LAVA FIELDS OF THE BIG ISLAND SLOWLY BEING RECLAIMED BY LIFE. I HAVE SEEN WHAT RESILIENCE LOOKS LIKE WHEN NATURE IS GIVEN THE CHANCE TO DO ITS WORK. WHAT NATURE CANNOT DO IS RECOVER FROM WILLFUL NEGLECT ENABLED BY A GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF THE WRONG INTERESTS. THAT IS WHERE CONGRESS COMES IN. THAT IS WHERE I COME IN.

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