



September 12, 2008

Copyright 2008 Hawaii Tribune-Herald, Stephens Media, LLC, d/b/a Hawaii Tribune-Herald, All Rights Reserved.

Rent is past due

Some claim Hawaiian activists offer no economic alternatives to building the giant Thirty Meter Telescope on Mauna Kea. This is incorrect. First, Mauna Kea is comprised entirely of "ceded lands." All ceded lands are held in trust for Native Hawaiians and the general public. This condition was imposed by Congress in the Statehood Act to deal with the fact the U.S. had no legal title or lawful claims to Hawaii. Therefore, when Hawaiians don't get their 20 percent, the public is generally is not getting its 80 percent.

State law requires the collection of "fair market" lease rent for the use of these lands. It is unlawful for the governments and corporations operating on Mauna Kea to pay only \$1 per year in lease rent.

Seven years ago, my organization and the Royal Order of Kamehameha I prepared an "economic proposal" to assist the state with the telescope rent issue. The report, "Mauna Kea the Temple: Protecting the Sacred Resource," was sent to lawmakers, the Board of Land and Natural Resources, the University of Hawaii and many others. Our report suggests the state charge the observatories, collectively, about \$50 million per year. It suggests the \$50 million be earmarked for, among other things, historic preservation, conservation, aquatics and enforcement divisions, the university (for student tuition waivers and stipends for all, including Native Hawaiians), the Charter School Alliance and the Office of Hawaii Affairs for kupuna health and housing.

If the state had been charging the observatories lease rent all these years as the law requires, major state and educational programs would have received hundreds of millions of dollars by now. Instead, students attending UH literally pay more just to park than some of the richest nations pay to use Mauna Kea.

The rent is past due now and it should be paid without further development.

Kealoha **Pisciotta**

President, Mauna Kea -Anaina Hou