

Laws Make a Difference – And So Can You

Student Resource Guide

Kaua'i Community College • Spring 2026

This guide provides curated resources organized by topic area based on questions received. Resources include non-partisan national and Hawai'i-specific organizations, government websites, legal aid services, and civic action tools.

1. General Government & Executive Power

Resources for understanding the balance of power, the executive branch, and how legal precedent is set.

Constitutional & Legal Foundations	
Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute	Free access to U.S. Code, CFR, court opinions, and plain-language explanations of constitutional law and separation of powers.
U.S. Courts — About the Federal Courts	Official resource explaining how federal courts work, how cases reach SCOTUS, and how judicial precedent is established.
Oyez — Supreme Court Cases	User-friendly database of Supreme Court cases with oral argument audio and plain-language summaries.
Brennan Center for Justice	Nonpartisan law and policy institute tracking presidential power, voting rights, and democracy issues with research reports.
Tracking Current Government Actions	
Congress.gov	Official source for tracking federal legislation, floor votes, committee hearings, and Congressional records.
GovTrack	Independent tracker of bills, votes, and Congressional activity with data-driven analysis.

2. Federal Budget & Spending

Resources for understanding how federal dollars are allocated and tracking government expenditures.

USASpending.gov	Official federal database showing where government money goes — contracts, grants, loans, and direct payments by agency and state.
Congressional Budget Office (CBO)	Nonpartisan analysis of federal budget and economic outlook; publishes reports on spending, deficits, and policy costs.
Peter G. Peterson Foundation	Budget and fiscal policy analysis with charts and explainers on federal spending trends.

3. Immigration

Addressing constitutional rights and community resources in Hawai'i.

Know Your Rights	
ACLU — Immigrants’ Rights	Plain-language guide to constitutional rights that apply to everyone in the U.S. regardless of immigration status.
National Immigration Law Center	Policy analysis and know-your-rights materials on immigration enforcement, workplace rights, and public benefits.
ILRC — Red Cards	Downloadable “Red Cards” in multiple languages explaining certain constitutional rights.
ACLU of Hawai‘i	Local affiliate covering civil liberties in Hawai‘i, including immigration enforcement, with state-specific resources.
Legal Aid in Hawai‘i	
Legal Aid Society of Hawai‘i	Provides free civil legal services to low-income residents, including immigration matters. Has offices on multiple islands.
Hawaii Appleseed Center	Advocates for economic and social justice in Hawai‘i, with resources on immigrant rights and affordable housing.
Federal Immigration Information	
ICE — Official Website	Official DHS/ICE site with policy information, detainer statistics, and enforcement data.
DHS — Immigration Statistics	Federal data on immigration enforcement, removals, and detention by region.

4. Housing, Affordability & Land Use in Hawai‘i

Resources on housing policy, short-term rentals, foreign investment, and affordability in Hawai‘i.

Hawai‘i State Resources	
Hawaii Housing Finance & Development Corp.	State agency overseeing affordable housing programs, financing, and development in Hawai‘i.
DBEDT — Hawaii Housing Data	State economic data on housing costs, availability, and trends by county.
Hawai‘i Land Use Commission	State commission governing land classification and development permits.
Kaua‘i County Resources	
County of Kaua‘i — Planning Department	Local authority on zoning, Transient Vacation Rentals (TVRs), and land use permits on Kaua‘i.
Kaua‘i County General Plan	Long-range comprehensive plan for land use, housing, and development on Kaua‘i.
Research & Advocacy	
Hawaii Appleseed — Housing	Reports and advocacy on housing affordability and homelessness in Hawai‘i.
National Housing Law Project	National resource on tenant rights, affordable housing preservation, and housing policy.
Urban Land Institute — Hawaii	Real estate and land-use research, including reports on Hawaii housing supply and affordability.

5. Education — DOE, Native Hawaiian Students & Federal Policy

Resources on Hawai'i's Department of Education, Native Hawaiian education programs, and the impact of federal education policy.

Hawaii State Education	
Hawai'i Department of Education	Official DOE site with strategic plans, reports, school data, and policy information.
Hawai'i Board of Education	Governing board for DOE; meeting agendas, minutes, and policy decisions are publicly available.
University of Hawai'i System	UH System overview including scholarships, financial aid, and policy updates affecting students.
Native Hawaiian Education	
Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA)	State agency advocating for Native Hawaiian rights with resources on education, scholarships, and cultural programs.
Kamehameha Schools	Major private school system dedicated to Native Hawaiian education; publishes research on Native Hawaiian educational data.
Native Hawaiian Education Council	Federally recognized body coordinating Native Hawaiian education programs under the Native Hawaiian Education Act.
Title VII — Native Hawaiian Education Act	U.S. Department of Education page on the federal program funding Native Hawaiian education initiatives.
Federal Education Policy	
U.S. Department of Education	Federal policies, funding streams, and civil rights resources. Track changes to Title IX, Title VI, and grant programs.
Education Trust	Nonpartisan research on educational equity, with analysis of federal and state policy impacts on underserved students.

6. Homelessness in Hawai'i

Resources for understanding and addressing homelessness, particularly as it relates to interstate migration.

Department of Human Services - Homelessness Programs	State coordinating body on homelessness; publishes annual point-in-time counts and action plans.
Partners in Care — Oahu CoC	Continuum of Care coordinating organization; data on homelessness trends, demographics, and service gaps.
Kaua'i Economic Opportunity (KEO)	Local community action agency providing emergency shelter, housing assistance, and social services on Kaua'i.
National Alliance to End Homelessness	National research, policy analysis, and data on homelessness causes, demographics, and effective interventions.
HUD Exchange — Homelessness Data	Federal data on homelessness by geography, funding, and program type.

7. Environmental Issues — Ocean Safety, Tourism & Invasive Species

Resources on environmental education for tourists, ocean safety, and invasive species management in Hawai'i.

Ocean & Tourist Safety	
Hawai'i DLNR — Division of Aquatic Resources	State agency managing ocean resources with reef education, fishing rules, and ocean safety materials.
NOAA — Pacific Islands	Federal ocean resource management including coral reef conservation, endangered species, and public education.
HI Tourism Authority — Malama Hawaii	Hawaii Tourism Authority's responsible tourism initiative — framework for tourist education on environmental stewardship.
National Park Service — Hawaii	Visitor guidelines and environmental education resources for Hawaii national parks and monuments.
Invasive Species	
Hawaii Invasive Species Council	State interagency body coordinating invasive species prevention and control; resources for community engagement.
UH CTAHR — Invasive Species	UH College of Tropical Agriculture research on pest management, invasive plants, and native species restoration.
USDA APHIS	Federal plant and animal health inspections, import restrictions, and biosecurity for Hawaii.
The Nature Conservancy — Hawaii	Conservation projects protecting native ecosystems from invasive species with local volunteer opportunities.

8. County & Local Government Accountability

Understanding local government structure, legal accountability of officials, and how to access local laws.

Kaua'i County Government	
County of Kaua'i Official Website	Central hub for all county departments, elected officials, meeting agendas, and public documents.
Hawai'i State Laws & Legal Access	
Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS)	Official compilation of all Hawai'i state laws, searchable by subject or statute number.
Hawaii Legislative Reference Bureau	Provides research and bill drafting for the Legislature; publishes plain-language guides to state law.
State of Hawai'i Judiciary	Court records, self-help legal resources, and information on how to file complaints or access justice.
Legal Help & Accountability	
Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i	Free legal services for qualifying residents; can advise on government accountability and civil rights.
Office of the Ombudsman — Hawai'i	State office that investigates complaints against state and county agencies and recommends remedies.

State Ethics Commission	Enforces public officials' code of conduct, financial disclosures, and conflict-of-interest rules.
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9. Traffic Safety — Distracted Driving

Resources on distracted driving laws, data, and prevention education.

Hawaii Dept. of Transportation — Traffic Safety	State traffic safety programs, crash statistics, and road safety education.
NHTSA — Distracted Driving	Federal data, research, and campaigns on the impact of texting while driving.
Governor's Highway Safety Association	State-by-state summary of distracted driving laws including Hawai'i hand-held device statutes.

10. How to Make a Difference — Civic Action & Constitutional Rights

Resources for everyday people to advocate for change, protect their rights, and influence policy at every level.

Know Your Rights — Constitutional Protections	
ACLU — Know Your Rights	Comprehensive guides on constitutional rights: free speech, assembly, due process, privacy, and more.
Center for Constitutional Rights	Litigation and education on fundamental rights; resources on resisting unconstitutional government action.
Civic Action & Community Organizing	
Vote.gov	Official federal resource for voter registration, election information, and civic participation.
Represent.Us	Nonpartisan anti-corruption organization with tools for local ballot initiatives and government accountability.
Hawai'i Civic Action	
Hawai'i State Legislature — Testimony	Submit written or in-person testimony on any bill; view hearing schedules and track legislation.
ACLU of Hawai'i	Files impact litigation and advocates on civil liberties issues specific to Hawai'i; community resources.
Common Cause Hawai'i	Advocates for open government, voting rights, and campaign finance reform in Hawai'i.
League of Women Voters — Hawai'i	Nonpartisan voter education, candidate forums, and civic engagement programming across islands.

11. Student Civic Engagement — Joining Federal Conversations

This section is specifically expanded for students who want to move from awareness to action — at the campus, state, and federal level. The resources below offer internships, fellowships, advocacy networks, youth councils, and direct pathways into policy conversations in Washington, D.C. and throughout Hawai'i.

A. Student Government & Campus Advocacy

<u>KCC Student Government</u>	Your campus student government is a recognized vehicle for advocacy with the UH Board of Regents and the state legislature.
<u>University of Hawai'i Board of Regents</u>	UH students can testify at BOR meetings and submit formal requests on policy matters affecting the UH system.
<u>UH Student Caucus</u>	System-wide student association that sends student delegates to the state legislature and advocates on higher education policy.
<u>American Student Government Association</u>	National organization supporting student government leaders with resources, conferences, and leadership training.

B. Federal Internships & Fellowships for Students

<u>Mānoa Political Internship Program</u>	These internships offer a rare opportunity to work at the top levels of government.
<u>Sen. Mazie Hirono — Internships</u>	Offers internships in Washington D.C. and Hawai'i district offices; open to college students.
<u>Sen. Brian Schatz - Internships</u>	Offers internships in Washington D.C. and Hawai'i district offices; open to college students.
<u>Rep. Ed Case — Internships</u>	Congressional internship opportunities for Hawai'i students in D.C. and Honolulu offices.
<u>Rep. Jill Tokuda – Internships</u>	Congressional internship opportunities for Hawai'i students in D.C. and Honolulu offices.
<u>USAJOBS — Student Programs</u>	Official federal job portal with student and recent graduate programs (Pathways Internships, PMF Program).
<u>Truman Scholarship Foundation</u>	Prestigious scholarship for college juniors committed to public service careers, including policy, government, and advocacy.

C. Youth Civic Leadership Programs

<u>Senate Youth Program (USSYP)</u>	Selects two high school seniors from each state to participate in a week-long Washington D.C. program with Senators, Cabinet members, and Supreme Court Justices.
<u>Close Up Washington</u>	Experiential civic education program in D.C. bringing students face-to-face with policymakers; college programs available.
<u>Boys & Girls Nation</u>	National leadership program culminating in visits to Congress and the White House.

D. Advocacy Networks & Coalitions

<u>Generation Citizen</u>	Action civics organization helping students identify community problems and advocate for policy solutions with real government officials.
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<u>Student PIRGs (State PIRGs)</u>	Student-led public interest advocacy groups on campuses; run campaigns on climate, voting rights, and government accountability.
<u>Campus Vote Project</u>	Helps college students register, vote, and engage with elections and elected officials.
<u>Young Invincibles</u>	Advocates for the economic interests of millennials and Gen Z; engages young adults in federal budget and health policy.
<u>The Congressional App Challenge</u>	Annual competition for students to create apps addressing policy problems; winners present at the U.S. Capitol.
<u>The Fund for American Studies (TFAS)</u>	Runs summer institute programs in Washington D.C. for college students focused on government, economics, and journalism, with direct access to policymakers. Rooted in free-market and limited-government values; well-regarded across the political spectrum.

E. Hawai'i-Specific Civic Pathways

<u>PACE — Hawaii Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education</u>	The Hawaii Judiciary's civic education commission; advocates for civic learning programs statewide.
<u>Project Citizen — Hawaii</u>	Students research a public policy problem and present a portfolio to real government officials; leads to State Showcase and national competition.
<u>We the People — Hawaii</u>	Simulated congressional hearing program where students argue constitutional principles before volunteer judges, often attorneys and judges.
<u>Hawai'i State Aha Moku</u>	State body incorporating traditional Hawaiian resource management; engages Native Hawaiian students in environmental governance.
<u>Office of Hawaiian Affairs — Youth</u>	Grants and programs for Native Hawaiian youth leadership and civic participation.

F. Writing to Your Representatives

<u>Find Your Federal Representatives</u>	Enter your zip code to find your U.S. Senators and House Representatives with direct contact links.
<u>Sen. Mazie Hirono</u>	Contact form for constituent services, policy questions, and scheduling meetings with staff.
<u>Sen. Brian Schatz</u>	Contact form for constituent concerns; Senator Schatz is active on technology, climate, and Native Hawaiian issues.
<u>Rep. Ed Case (HI-01)</u>	Contact form for Oahu's 1st Congressional District representative.
<u>Rep. Jill Tokuda (HI-02)</u>	Contact form for the 2nd Congressional District, which includes Kaua'i.

G. Civic Technology & Digital Tools

<u>OpenSecrets</u>	Tracks campaign contributions and lobbying spending; helps students understand who funds political decisions.
<u>Ballotpedia</u>	Encyclopedia of U.S. elections, ballot measures, government officials, and civic information.

12. General Civic Literacy & Reference

Essential resources for civic knowledge applicable across all topic areas.

iCivics	Free, standards-aligned civics games and lesson plans for all ages from Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's organization.
Center for Civic Education	Publisher of We the People and Project Citizen curricula; resources on constitutional principles and civic participation.
Annenberg Classroom	Free First Amendment and constitutional law resources including documentary films and lesson plans.
National Constitution Center	Interactive tools, podcasts, and resources explaining the U.S. Constitution and its ongoing interpretation.
Civic Nation	Coalition of organizations promoting voter registration, civic education, and inclusive democracy.
Hawai'i Council for the Humanities	Supports public programs exploring Hawai'i history, culture, and civic life with grants and community events.

A Note on Civic Action: Every question in today's panel reflects a real problem that real people in Hawai'i are working to solve. The resources in this guide are starting points — not endpoints. The most powerful civic tool is showing up consistently: at county council meetings, at the state legislature, in letters to representatives, and through organizations that amplify community voices. Mālama 'aina, mālama kanaka.

Prepared by the Hawaii Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education (PACE) | Hawaii State Judiciary