

OFFICE OF THE CORPORATION COUNSEL

ROLES AND DUTIES

The Office of the Corporation Counsel provides legal representation and support for all of the County departments, employees, officers, boards and commissions. Our primary purpose is to empower all County agencies and employees to perform their respective duties effectively.

The Corporation Counsel maintains three offices. Our main office located in the Hilo Lagoon Centre houses our counseling and drafting division and our litigation division. We provide services to our County clients island-wide. There are 11 attorneys, one legal assistant, one private secretary, seven legal clerks, one accountant, and one investigator/claims adjuster.

The Family Support Division accounts for the other two offices in our County. This division exclusively provides legal representation for the Child Support Enforcement Agency for the State of Hawaii. Their role is to establish paternity, secure child and medical support, and provide enforcement in complex Family Court cases.

The Hilo office is located at 688 Kinoole Street, and is comprised of two attorneys, two legal assistants, six legal clerks, and one account clerk. The Kona office, located in Kealahou, houses one attorney, one legal assistant, and two legal clerks.

The staff of the Office of the Corporation Counsel considers it an honor to work in County government, and to provide proactive legal support to our client departments, agencies, employees, officers, boards and commissions. This allows county workers to perform their duties effectively in the service of the people. We strive to elevate our reputation through teamwork, professionalism, and accountability. We measure our success by client satisfaction.

The Office of the Corporation Counsel had a budget of \$2,195,310 for Fiscal Year 2000-2001.

Attorneys in the counseling and drafting division handle an average of seven different County clients. In the past fiscal year, these attorneys received more than 2,000 requests for legal assistance. Attorneys are responsible for a case from its inception to final disposition, including appeals.

During Fiscal Year 2000-2001, a total of 289 claims was processed by our office. Attorneys in our litigation division handle major lawsuits brought against the County, including subsequent appeals to final disposition.

A monumental accomplishment during Fiscal Year 2000-2001 was the securing of the public service tax from the State, resulting in a \$4 million increase in revenues for the County, and an overall \$30 million increase for all counties statewide. Assistant Corporation Counsel

Gerald Takase handled this case personally, and spearheaded this multi-county effort, which significantly boosted County revenues, while avoiding any rate increase to the general public.

The most media-scrutinized litigation case this past fiscal year was the *Anderson* case, wherein the plaintiffs sued our County for over \$1 million, based upon a claim of malicious prosecution in a marijuana drug case. Our most senior litigation attorney, Joseph Kamelamela, assisted by Deputy Corporation Counsel Glenn Shiigi, represented our County. The federal court case ended in a jury verdict in favor of the County. As a result, all federal and state claims (a total of three lawsuits) in this case were resolved for \$75,000. It represented a mere .075 of the plaintiff's original demand, and a huge savings to our taxpayers.

The Office of the Corporation Counsel also represented the County (as an employer) in workers compensation claims made by County employees. During the fiscal year, 26 settlements were reached involving cases of permanent partial disability.

Following the flood in November of 2000, the Office of the Corporation Counsel's litigation division was asked to conduct on-site inspections and photograph various flooded sections of East Hawaii. The inspections included conducting interviews of flood victims who were seeking assistance from the County. Following receipt of flood claims filed by victims at the County Clerk's Office, flood claim files were established, and victims were interviewed at their homes. Claimants are being assured that their respective claims have not been ignored. All claims have been placed on a priority list the County is currently reviewing.

The Family Support Division initiated 489 paternity cases during the fiscal year 2000-2001. The Division collected over \$373,000 in child support during this period.

In the last half of the fiscal year, the Office of the Corporation Counsel upgraded its computer system to include networking capabilities, computerized case tracking, and increased word processing power. This improvement in office technology resulted in increased productivity, and was accomplished within the original allocated budget.