

Senators claim Inouye plots Native Hawaiian bill bypass

Posted By [admin](#) On December 3, 2010 @ 4:54 pm In [News](#) | [No Comments](#)

BY MALIA ZIMMERMAN – Even though Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-HI, denied through a spokesman on Thursday he plans to attach the Native Hawaiian Reorganization Act to an omnibus spending bill, four of his peers Friday issued a statement condemning it.

Senators Jon Kyl, (R-Ariz.) Lamar Alexander, (R-Tenn.), John Cornyn, (R-Texas), and Tom Coburn, (R-Okla.) said they oppose any attempt to slip the law through

“Legislation as highly complex and divisive as the native Hawaiian bill requires vigorous discussion, debate, and amendments,” Kyl said. “An attempt to include it in unrelated legislation to keep the government operating is a breach of process and is an example of what the American people are tired of – back room deals that are inserted in secret packages written behind closed doors.”

Alexander said, “I’m concerned by reports that a special Native Hawaiian bill, or any other controversial measure, might be quietly inserted into must-pass legislation that’s needed to keep the government open.

“If the Democratic majority wishes to pass legislation that would create a new, sovereign government within our borders based solely upon race, it should be brought up separately and debated openly on the Senate floor with the opportunity for amendment.”

The “Akaka Bill”, named for U.S. Senator Daniel Akaka, creates a native Hawaiian sovereign government within the state. The accusations about Inouye’s plan, which would force his colleagues to either vote for the omnibus bill with no public comment, debate or amendment, or reject the whole bill and deny the government funding it needs to operate, were highlighted in part in a National Review column on Thursday.

Peter Boylan, spokesperson for Hawaii’s senior senator, says he doesn’t know where the National Review information came from because no sources were named. But Boylan maintains that as one of Inouye’s staff, he does not know of such a plan and has heard nothing to indicate that it is true.

In 2009, a group of native Hawaiian activists opposed to the proposed Act accused Inouye of planning to hide the legislation in a defense appropriations bill.

At the time, Inouye told [The Honolulu Advertiser](#) ^[1]“I have never suggested that the Akaka bill be passed and adopted as part of the defense appropriations process. I don’t know where this nonsensical suggestion originated.”

Boylan said Thursday that as far as he knows, Inouye is remaining consistent on his pledge not to hide the legislation in an appropriations bill.

The legislation, which was opposed by President George W. Bush and his Justice Department, but is supported by President Barack Obama, a former Hawaii resident, is fiercely debated among native Hawaiian groups and in political circles.

Native Hawaiian activists who are against the bill say they don't want the federal government to have authority over them. They believe the Hawaiian government was illegally overthrown in the late 1800s and don't recognize the state and federal government as authorities. They want Hawaii to revert to a sovereign government.

Conservatives and libertarians who strongly oppose the Akaka Bill believe the legislation is racially divisive, unconstitutional and problematic on a several levels. The U.S. Civil Rights commission condemned the bill. The Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, and in Hawaii, the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, along with many other public policy institutes, have expressed strong concerns over the measure.

Pushing for the bill are all four members of Hawaii's congressional delegation, Hawaii's Republican governor and lieutenant governor, elected officers of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and their supporters.

The majority of Hawaii lawmakers also back the legislation.

Congress has taken up the Akaka Bill more than a half a dozen times since 2000, the year the Akaka Bill was introduced. While it passed the House twice, the Senate never voted on the measure. Critics point out that the bill language has been changed many times since it was introduced, all in secret negotiations; that there have been no hearings on the current language of the bill; and there have been no public forums on this new bill in Hawaii.

Democrats and other Akaka bill advocates are concerned they won't get the votes they need in the House and Senate when the newly-elected Congress and have pushed for the Act, now more than a decade-old, to pass before 2011.

"This November, Americans spoke and we listened," said Cornyn. "Unfortunately, some of my Senate colleagues did not hear the resounding message that rejected secret backroom deals and controversial legislative distractions like this, which have no place in important bills that we need to pass keep our government running. I sincerely hope that Senator Reid will not slip this bill into the omnibus bill, and reassess his legislative priorities to reflect the wishes of the American people."

Coburn said, "Any efforts to circumvent the thorough vetting process of Congress to pass Native Hawaiian legislation is an affront to taxpayers and the U.S. Constitution. The federal government has already established a process for recognizing tribal groups. Recognizing Native Hawaiians as an Indian tribe and sovereign entity by circumventing the established process not only creates a parallel sovereign government in the State of Hawaii, but will set a dangerous precedent that could threaten the framework of our nation."