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HB 342 MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR ADDITIONAL PARK RANGERS

Statement for
House Committee
Water, Land Use Development and Hawaiian Affairs
Public Hearing - 23 February 1981

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HB 342 would provide funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources for the purpose of hiring additional State Park Rangers. Our statement on HB 342 does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

We strongly support the proposed Park Ranger Program as put forth in HB 61 and inasmuch as HB 342 would provide the necessary funding to hire State Park Rangers, we would also support the intent of HB 342. However, under present Hawaii Revised Statutes, Chapter 184, dealing with State Parks and Recreation Areas, there are no "State Park Ranger" positions. Hence the passage of HB 342 would provide funding for non-existent positions.

There is the provision under HRS 184-5 for state parks enforcement officers and these officers are given the broad powers of police officers.

While we strongly favor the intent of HB 342 to provide funding for State Park Rangers, (in the context of the Park Ranger Program as proposed by HB 61), we do not feel that the needs of the community with regard to safe, enjoyable use of our state parks will be accomplished simply by the institution of more police type supervision if HB 342 were to be amended to apply to state parks enforcement officers. What one would hope to develop is an understanding and appreciation for the safe and enjoyable use of the facilities of state parks within a co-operative, rather than adversary, relationship between park officers and park users. While we fully recognize the need for police type action and enforcement responsibility when necessary, the development of a Park Ranger Program through the use of properly trained Park Rangers should decrease the necessity for police type enforcement needs.