SR 45 and SCR 23 would request the Department of Planning and Economic Development (DPED) "to develop guidelines for a step-by-step permit processing and approval system to facilitate the development of geothermal resources." This statement on the resolution does not reflect an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

As recognized in the resolutions, it is a goal of the State to reduce Hawaii's dependency on oil as a source of energy. The development of energy from Hawaiian geothermal resources is attractive because it would reduce the State's dependency on importations of oil or any other out-of-State energy source, because it has been proved economic at least at one site, and because the geothermal resources are at least in part renewable.

As in the case of development of energy from any source, development from geothermal resources has the potential for causing environmental harm. Principally in order to provide adequate environmental safeguards, a system for regulating such developments has been superimposed on pre-existing regulatory systems.

As recognized in the resolutions, the development of geothermal resources may have been somewhat deterred by the complexity of the overall system of permit processing and approval. The deterrence of such development where the environmental harm would be great is, of course, an aim of the system. However the system's complexity, as such, may have some detrimental effect on the consideration of development even where the development might cause only slight environmental harm. It is therefore appropriate to encourage the development of means for reducing either the complexity of the system or the difficulties of would-be developers in coping with it, provided the safeguards that the system is intended to provide are not impaired. From an environmental standpoint, the resolutions would be improved if this proviso were expressed explicitly in them. It may, however, be implicit in the phrasing of the request as relating to "guidelines for a step-by-step permit processing and approval system."

Such guidelines might consist simply of the elucidation of means for coping with the present complex system. Alternatively, they might relate to a more streamlined system retaining the same safeguards. Relaxation of the safeguards would not be required, and the guidelines should be so formulated that such relaxation could not result from their implementation.