East-West Center Oral History Project: Frank Damon and Robert Kamins

Frank Damon

Robert Kamins

In 1960, Hawai'i’s first senators, Hiram Fong (Republican) and Oren Long (Democrat), and 47 other senators sponsored Senate Bill S.3385 which authorized the establishment of the East-West Center. Fong's administrative assistant, Frank Damon, and Long's administrative assistant, Robert Kamins, recount their memories of Hawai'i’s first years in the U.S. Senate and the passage of this bill. After several years in Washington both men returned to the islands. Frank Damon co-founded Honolulu law firm Damon Key Leong Kupchak Hastert from which he is now retired. Dr. Robert M. Kamins headed the state's Legislative Reference Bureau, taught in UH's Economics Department, and co-wrote *Malamalama: a history of the University of Hawai'i*.

Read their interview narrative (see separate pdf)

- **Personal Background**
- **Founding of the EWC - Role of Hawai'i’s U.S. Senators - LBJ’s Role/ Senate Bill 3385**
  - Bipartisanship in U.S. Senate, 1960s
- **EWC’s Impact**
**Interview Quotes**

*Robert Kamins:*

“Then came the interesting, important, exciting question -- voiced by Lyndon Johnson: Why shouldn’t there be an institute to connect the U.S. more broadly and intimately with the Asian and Pacific parts of the world? The University of Hawai‘i then said, “Yeah, that’s a good idea,” and Professor Murray Turnbull was named to chair a faculty committee to plan such an institute.

*Robert Kamins:*

“When a bill was drafted – Senate Bill 3385 it became – to create an East-West Center, its initial sponsors were Senators Long and Fong of Hawai‘i and Senator Lyndon Johnson of Texas. That put the Majority Leader’s license plate on the bill, and with it, it was easy to get more senators as introducers. SB 3385 went before the Senate with half of its members – a most unusually large sponsorship – as its introducers.”

*Frank Damon:*

“This is Senate Bill 3385. It’s such an incredible document. I mean, here is a bill that was signed by 49 senators. One more and it would have been half the Senate. It was important that Oren Long introduced it because Senator Johnson had the majority of Senate Democrats behind him. Senator Fong obtained the support of Republican senators, including Dirksen of Illinois who was the most powerful Republican. Other senators included Mansfield, Wiley, Moss, McCarthy, Muskie and Humphrey. “

*These narratives, which reflect interviewees’ personal perceptions, opinions and memories, may contain errors of fact. They do not reflect positions or versions of history officially approved by the East-West Center.*

LINK (as of 06/04/2020)

https://www.eastwestcenter.org/research/research-information-services/oral-history-project/frank-damon-and-robert-kamins