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## OHA winners think it was name power

### Mixed messages from the voters

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Tuesday's election for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs hinged on name recognition, said the top two winners, Rowena Akana and Clayton Hee.

Forty-five people were running for five seats on the OHA board of trustees.

Hawaiian voters re-elected all four incumbents in the race — Akana, Hee, A. Frenchy DeSoto and Abe Aiona — and gave the other seat to Billie Beamer, a familiar figure in the Hawaiian community and critic of OHA.

"At least in the OHA elections, it appears that name visibility counts an awful lot," said Hee, who drew 20,466 votes to win the Oahu seat.

Akana had the highest vote total, 20,809, to win one of three at-large seats.

"No one was more surprised than I to be at the top of 45 people," she said yesterday.

Hee said the net result of Tuesday's election was: "We lost Kamaki and gained Billie Beamer."

Some observers expected Hee to retain the chairmanship, although such is the state of OHA intrigue that nothing is certain.

Akana has been an outspoken critic of Hee and his leadership of the OHA board. Beamer, former Hawaiian Homes Commission chairwoman

and onetime lieutenant governor candidate, has also publicly attacked the OHA board with a public access cable television show.

Akana said, "People elected her as they did me, and hoped for some change. Yet almost in the same breath they put back the same people (who are the targets of the criticisms).

"It is a contradiction."

She said voters sent "definitely mixed signals" by electing her and Hee, whom she criticized for waging an expensive TV and radio ad campaign.

Beamer won the seat that had been held by Kamaki Kanahele, who ran for the state Senate instead of re-election.

Names are listed alphabetically on the ballots, and Akana was listed first among at-large candidates. Some challengers saw it as an advantage.

Akana said, "I think being near the top is helpful, sure, but what's more important than that is the name recognition." She noted that former trustee Tommy Kaulukukui won every time he ran, despite being listed far down the list of candidates.

The highest-finishing new name among the 31 at-large candidates was Alapaki Nahale'a of Hilo, the youngest candidate at 26.

Nahale'a was pleased with his showing, he said, but "very disappointed" with overall outcome of the OHA voting.

"We've chosen the status quo," said Nahale'a. "People haven't liked what they had in the past, which is the message I heard on the campaign — but they're going to get it."

He also said he's concerned that young people have no voice in OHA. Hee, 41, is the youngest member of the board.

Nahale'a said he was one of about 15 OHA candidates — none of whom won — who attended all of the candidate forums and who have made a vow to stay involved.

Meanwhile, Nahale'a said, "The nine members have to make some peace and do what's best for all the Hawaiians — they can't do that with dignity until they treat each other with respect."