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has grabbed all the headlines, there are a number of other seats up for election, ranging from those on the state Board of Education to the Kauai County Council.

Democratic U.S. Rep. Neil Abercrombie hopes to fend off challenges from Republican Orson Swindle, Libertarian Roger Taylor and Best Party candidate Alexandra Kaan to keep his seat representing the 1st District (Urban Honolulu).

# OHA election gathers renewed significance

By Mark Matsunaga  
Advertiser Staff Writer

With the Office of Hawaiian Affairs flexing new financial muscle and sovereignty issues fueling Hawaiian political activity, 45 candidates are running in tomorrow's election for five seats on OHA's board of trustees.

"Now I think Hawaiians really need to focus on who can best take OHA into the future, especially with the significant funding potential it has now," says Dawn Farm-Ramsey, president of the Hawaiian Political Action Committee.

"We cannot be voting for people just because we like them. We need to focus on integrity and ability to take our community into the next phase, including self-determination, whatever form it takes."

The candidates come from all points on the spectrum of Island life. They include four incumbents, at least two former trustees, a couple of entertainers, a handful of lawyers, teachers, self-employed people, and several in social and community service.

Nineteen people ran in 1992, when four OHA seats were up for election. The largest field of OHA candidates was the 136 who ran in the very first OHA election in 1980, when all nine seats were open.

Hawaii voters in 1978 narrowly approved - 130,230 to 121,993 - a proposal to establish an Office of Hawaiian Affairs to address the needs of Hawaiian people.

In the beginning, OHA was given \$225,000 from the state plus about \$1.2 million of trust land revenues. With last year's massive infusion of funds to settle some past claims, OHA's assets today total almost \$180 million.

Meanwhile, Hawaiian political energy sparked by the January 1993 centennial of the overthrow of Queen Liliu'okalani

Also, Maui and Kauai voters will pick new mayors.

Four of 13 state Board of Education seats are up for grabs as well as five of nine Office of Hawaiian Affairs seats.

Besides voting for elected officials, voters statewide will cast ballots on eight proposed constitutional amendments. And voters on Oahu, Maui and the Big Island will decide on proposed changes to their county charters.

## ABOUT OHA:

□ There are 75,766 Hawaii voters who also are registered to vote in the Office of Hawaiian Affairs election this year.

□ Five of the nine seats on the OHA board of trustees are up for election tomorrow: three at-large, the Maui seat and the Oahu seat.

□ All OHA voters statewide may cast ballots for each seat; the Maui and Oahu labels apply only to the candidates.

continues to grow with the various movements for sovereignty and self-determination.

A year ago, Congress gave sovereignty a huge lift with passage of a resolution apologizing for the U.S. role in the overthrow.

In response to an Advertiser survey, all but a handful of the OHA candidates said they expect some form of Hawaiian sovereignty to be achieved within their lifetime.

Many Hawaiian sovereignty advocates denounce OHA as an organ of the state, but even some of them are running for the board.

Said Farm-Ramsey, "It would be like an ostrich for anyone ... now to ignore an entity with so much potential and funding for the first time."

The organization she heads, formerly the Hawaiian Civic Political Action Committee, has been airing a series of hard-hitting ads urging Hawaiians to "take an active role in their own personal and collective self-determination by participating in government and legislative activities and voting," said Farm-Ramsey.

"I can't overemphasize how strongly we feel about Hawaiian participation in legislation and government," she said.