

THE AKAKA-CASE RACE

E-mail misleading, Case says

A letter criticizing his position on Hawaiian issues has reached thousands of people

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An e-mail blasting Senate hopeful Ed Case's position on Hawaiian issues has been sent to thousands of alumni of Kamehameha Schools.

The e-mail, which criticizes Case's actions when he was chairman of the state House Hawaiian Affairs Committee in 1998, was written by William Meheula, the law partner of Andy Winer. Winer is campaign chairman for Case's opponent in the Democratic primary, U.S. Sen. Daniel Akaka.

Meheula said he originally sent the e-mail to a few Akaka supporters, but it was forwarded to the thousands of Kamehameha graduates.

Case said Meheula's letter "completely misrepresents my bill."

"He says my bill would have completely eliminated the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and the Department Hawaiian Home Lands.

"My bill proposed to combine them into a single entity that would have both land and money and would have been a powerful entity operating on behalf of native Hawaiians," Case said last week in an interview.

But Meheula said, "As a Hawaiian and someone who has been involved in the legal issues, Ed Case is not a friend of the Hawaiian."

"He demonstrated that with his legislative record while he was in the House," he said.

Asked about Case's characterization of the autonomy bill as strengthening Hawaiian autonomy, Meheula said "if he was right, there would not have been the marches against him."

Case's bill said its purpose was to "provide self-sufficiency and self-determination for native Hawaiians."

Meheula, however, argued that Case's bill would "have stopped native Hawaiian recognition for all time."



54% vs. 33%
47% vs. 45%

That's what the two candidates say polls are showing. Who's leading whom?

To further his argument, Meheula, who has represented the Office of Hawaiian Affairs in court, sent an e-mail to "about 20" political supporters of Akaka.

Winer said his law partner's e-mail was not part of the Akaka campaign, but there was no objection to it.

Elisa Yadao, Akaka campaign spokeswoman and a former spokeswoman for Kamehameha Schools, also said the e-mail was not part of the campaign, but she called it "an accurate assessment of Ed's legislative record and pretty illuminating and revealing of his position of native Hawaiian issues."

Case said that since the native Hawaiian sovereignty bill pushed by Akaka has failed in Congress, people are now considering "the concepts that I put forward as a way of providing a path forward.

"Time has proven the merits of some of the ideas," he said.

But he acknowledged that in 1998 he had to withdraw the bill because it was so controversial. At the time, Case said it was "the right idea, put out by the wrong person at the wrong time."

"My personal observation of knowing Bill (Meheula) both personally and professionally is that he is not going to let the facts get in the way of what he wants to say," Case said.