



The New Governor's New Outlook

An Interview with The Honorable
Linda Lingle, Governor, Hawaii

EDITORS' NOTE Elected in 2000, Linda Lingle is the first woman to serve as Hawaii's governor and the first Republican to lead the state since 1962. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, she graduated cum laude from California State University at Northridge in 1975, then moved to Hawaii, where she became the public information officer of the Hawaii Teamsters and Hotel Workers Union. After founding the Molokai Free Press, a community newspaper, Lingle was elected to the Maui County Council in 1980 and as mayor of Maui County in 1990 (winning reelection four years later).



Linda Lingle

In this interview Governor Lingle shares her vision for Hawaii's future, including the state's economic and trade prospects with Pacific Rim nations, and why she believes the U.S. military will utilize Hawaii even more in coming years.

Several issues head your agenda for Hawaii's future – among them economic diversification, improved public education, honesty/integrity in government, and combating illegal drugs. Which are most important to you?

All of these issues go hand in hand and speak to improving our residents' quality of life, while ensuring that Hawaii remains an ideal destination for visitors and an attractive place to do business. But while these priorities are equally important and interrelated, I believe that improving and diversifying our economy is the key to realizing our shared goals.

A robust business environment creates meaningful employment opportunities, which enable our talented men and women to live, work, and raise families here. A thriving economy provides Hawaii with the financial resources it needs to offer the kinds of services a government is responsible for, such as improving public education, administering health and human services, combating illegal drugs, ensuring public safety, and upgrading our infrastructure.

My administration believes we can expand and diversify the state's economy by

fostering an environment that treats all businesses fairly and as valued partners. This means working cooperatively to eliminate unfair and duplicative business laws and fees, as well as adopting legislation that increases efficiency when businesses interact with government.

What can Hawaii offer investors that other states can't?

Just the fact that we're an island state, strategically located at the crossroads of the Pacific,

sets us apart from the other states. Because of our unique location, businesses that invest and grow in Hawaii can take advantage of the proximity to key business and financial centers throughout the Pacific Rim. In addition, our time zone allows business to be conducted in real time with North and South America, Europe, and Asia.

In addition, Hawaii offers attractive economic and investment incentives, a highly skilled and motivated workforce, a superior telecom infrastructure, and transferable knowledge and expertise in emerging industries. And, while our residents work hard to remain competitive in the global marketplace, living in Hawaii affords us the opportunity to enjoy a lifestyle that's unmatched anywhere in the world. From our islands' unsurpassed natural beauty to our unique melding of cultures and traditions, we truly live and work in paradise.

How will your administration generate more economic ties with Pacific Rim countries, including China?

Hawaii is the most Asian of U.S. states, with deep familial and cultural ties to that continent. Asian peoples know Hawaii. We're universally viewed as one of world's most beautiful locations, known equally for our natural environment and the warm, caring "aloha spirit" of our people. We have very strong brand-name recognition, which we're working to leverage and apply to products, expertise, and services that Asian and other Pacific nations need.

As the Pacific Rim continues on its economic development path, it will need expertise, technologies, solutions, and high-value-content services that comple-

ment emerging industrial economies. For example, China's ascension to the World Trade Organization means that tens of thousands of formerly state-owned enterprises will require upgrading – in terms of both hardware, such as equipment and capital goods, and software, such as management expertise, systems, and know-how – in order to be competitive. Hawaii has a tremendous edge in providing the needed software. In fact, we'll be positioning ourselves as an accessible knowledge portal for Asia in general and China in particular.

How optimistic are you that the U.S. military will invest more in Hawaii in the future?

Very optimistic. Hawaii's strategic location is just as important today – if not more so – as it was a century ago, when Pearl Harbor was a staging point for U.S. warships heading to the Philippines during the Spanish-American War. Today, Hawaii is home to the U.S. Pacific Command [PACOM], which is responsible for deterring aggression throughout the Pacific Rim. It also serves as headquarters for the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. By virtue of its overwhelming strength, the U.S. military acts as a bulwark to maintain peace and stability throughout Asia.

I've spoken at length with quite a few military leaders, including Admiral Thomas Fargo, the PACOM commander, and they've all assured me of the Pentagon's commitment to maintaining a strong presence in our region. The navy is looking to homeport an additional aircraft-carrier battle group in the Pacific, and I certainly hope Hawaii will be that home. The army plans to spend nearly \$700 million on infrastructure for a new Stryker Brigade attached to the 25th Infantry Division. And the air force and Hawaii Air National Guard are working to bring a squadron of C-17 transport aircraft to Hickam Air Force Base in support of the Stryker Brigade and other PACOM needs.

In July the U.S. Senate voted to appropriate \$482 million for military programs and installations throughout Hawaii. A possible aircraft carrier, the Stryker Brigade, C-17s, and other initiatives are clear indicators that our state will continue to be very actively involved in our nation's defense. ●