

**REMARKS BY U.S. SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE ON THE FLOOR OF
THE SENATE IN SUPPORT OF A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND
CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF STATEHOOD**

July 28, 2009

Fifty years ago next month the 85th Congress voted to allow a tiny island archipelago made up of people of every race and creed and situated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean entry into the Union.

August 21, 2009 marks the 50th anniversary of the execution of proclamation 3309, signed by president Dwight D. Eisenhower, which admitted Hawaii into the Union as the 50th state.

The territory of Hawaii was annexed to the United States in 1898 by a joint resolution of Congress based on a treaty signed with the Hawaiian government.

For many years thereafter, many delegations of congressmen and senators visited the territory to consider the pleas submitted by generations of our people requesting statehood.

And finally during the 85th Congress in 1959, members of the committee on interior and insular affairs and subcommittee on territorial and insular affairs led

by Congressman Leo W. O'Brien, visited the territory of Hawaii to make an inquiry into granting it statehood.

The members of the committee met with local leaders and government officials in Hawaii and noted that the islands of Hawaii formed a unique and successful racial melting pot, and claimed that if the rest of the nation could "mix" as well, our democracy would be advanced by a century.

The state of Hawaii has been a rich cultural addition to the United States thanks to the ancient culture of the Native Hawaiians, the diverse multi-racial society created by generations of Asian and European immigrants, and the stunning natural beauty of our tropical climate.

Hawaii has produced the first Chinese and Japanese American members of Congress, the first woman of color in congress, and the first Native Hawaiian in the Senate.

Barack Obama, the first African American president of the United States, was born and raised in downtown Honolulu.

Hawaii is much more than hula dancing, beaches and nice weather. Three hundred years before Christopher Columbus crossed the Atlantic Ocean in search of India, Polynesians boarded double hulled canoes and sailed north seeking Havaiki.

These ancient voyagers found Havaiki and settled there and slowly built their society and government. A kingdom emerged and a monarchy grew to gain the respect of nations around the world. The kingdom entered into treaties with the United Kingdom, France, Japan and the United States.

That kingdom was overthrown but the congress of the U.S., realizing that the takeover was not done in a democratic fashion, issued an official apology to the people of Hawaii.

It takes a great country to admit its wrongs.

Hawaii's location in the middle of the pacific, between the U.S. Mainland and the nations of Asia, has made it a major center of military defense for the United States.

Pearl Harbor serves as a critical naval outpost allowing our fleet to connect to the United States, Asia and other Pacific nations.

So critical is Pearl Harbor's location to our national defense that it was targeted by our enemies at the start of World War II.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 brought the United States into World War II, and revealed the loyalty the people of Hawaii had for the United States, and the sacrifices they were willing to make for their country.

Thousands of young men from Hawaii, including myself, volunteered to serve in the United States Army during World War II.

Nearly eight million visitors from around the world each year are drawn to Hawaii's breathtaking beaches, scenic sites, and unique culture.

Hawaii is home to one-fourth of the endangered species in the United States.

We have eight national parks, including the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, which is home to Kilauea, the most active volcano on earth.

Hawaii has truly added to the diversity and richness of the United States – culturally, racially, ecologically, and geographically.

The Congress of the United States celebrates Hawaii on this day, as the 50th state to enter the Union.