

HAWAI'I BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES  
February 14, 2018

Chairperson and Members  
Hawai'i Board on Geographic Names  
State of Hawai'i

SUBJECT: Create a decision category "Alternate Name"

**SUMMARY:** Currently geographic features reviewed by the Board may result in several decision categories: a) no change to the spelling of the place name; b) a spelling correction; or c) a name change. These decisions apply to the Primary Name listed in the USGS Geographic Names Information System database (GNIS).

This submittal proposes to create a new decision category for HBGN, "Alternate Name," which would carry the same weight for state agencies as the official name and spelling, with the understanding that there would be no impact on federal agencies, i.e., they would still be required to use the Primary Name listed in the GNIS. It is left to the Board to develop a more comprehensive definition of Alternate Name, as well as to clarify when and how it should be designated.

**BACKGROUND:** Pursuant to Chapter 4E, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, one of the responsibilities of the Hawai'i Board on Geographic Names is to *"designate the official names and spellings of geographic features in Hawai'i."*

There are many instances where passionate disagreements exist among community or cultural groups with respect to a place name and/or the spelling of a place name. The Board's current review process limits its decision making to designating a single official name, which is then communicated to the US Board on Geographic Names (US BGN) as the Primary Name with allowance for multiple Variant Names as acceptable alternatives.

However, while this offers some flexibility, it may not be sufficient to resolve conflicts over the place name of a given feature. Exacerbating these conflicts is a requirement that federal agencies use the Primary Name as it appears in the GNIS. Similarly, §4E-3(c), HRS, directs that state agencies *"shall use or cause to be used [the official names and spellings] on all maps and documents."*

§4E-3(b), HRS, allows HBGN to designate *"alternate names and spellings."* And once approved by the Board, these alternate names and spellings carry the same weight as the official names and spellings.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Board create a new decision category "Alternate Name," clearly define it, and identify when and how it is to be utilized.

Respectfully Submitted,  
/s/  
Arthur Buto

## EXHIBIT A

[http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol01\\_Ch0001-0042F/HR0000](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol01_Ch0001-0042F/HR0000)

HR0\_0004E

\* §4E-1 State board on geographic names.\* There shall be in the office of planning a state board on geographic names, consisting of the following persons or their representatives: the chairperson of the board of land and natural resources, the chairperson of the office of Hawaiian affairs, the chairperson of the Hawaiian homes commission, the director of the office of planning, the president of the University of Hawaii, the state land surveyor, and the director of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum. The members of the board shall serve without compensation.

Section 26-34 shall not apply to this board. [L 1974, c 50, pt of §2; am L 1987, c 336, §7; am L 1988, c 347, §1; am L 1996, c 299, §3]

\*[§4E-2] Chairperson, secretary.\* The representative from the department of land and natural resources shall serve as secretary of the board and as custodian of its official records. The board shall select one of its members as chairperson of the board to serve for a term of four years or until the chairperson's successor is selected. [L 1974, c 50, pt of §2; gen ch 1985, 1993]

\*[§4E-3] Responsibilities of the board.\* (a) The board shall designate the official names and spellings of geographic features in Hawaii and provide for circulation thereof to the appropriate state and other agencies. In its deliberations, the board shall solicit and consider the advice and recommendations of the appropriate county government officials, and, should the board desire, other knowledgeable persons.

(b) The department of land and natural resources shall publish an annual list of its decisions, together with information regarding location, the origin and meaning of names, and alternate names and spellings for the features named, which list together with the pertinent information shall be sent to the board of geographic names of the United States.

(c) The departments of the State shall use or cause to be used on all maps and documents prepared by or for them the names and spellings approved by the board on geographic names; provided that such names or spellings shall not be contrary to legally established names or spellings. [L 1974, c 50, pt of §2]