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**Candidates available for interviews**



## BREAKING: Running on Good Government Reform, Kim Coco Iwamoto Becomes First Person in US History to Defeat an Incumbent House Speaker in a Democratic Primary

*By running on good government reform and populist economic issues, she headlines a slate of candidates who defeated Democratic establishment backed opponents, delivering a change mandate*

**HONOLULU, HI** — With the final ballots tallied, voters made history last night in Hawai'i's elections by ending the reign of 30 year incumbent and 7 year House Speaker Scott Saiki in an election. According to an analysis by Our Hawai'i<sup>1</sup>, **Saiki is the first State House Speaker in US history to be defeated in a Democratic Primary.** Former Speaker Saiki's almost 5-point [defeat](#) by trailblazing community leader, activist, and businesswoman **Kim Coco Iwamoto** comes after several years of Hawai'i Democratic Party corruption scandals, indictments, convictions, arrests and general scrutiny and exposé on the role of pay-to-play politics in the Hawai'i Legislature that Speaker Saiki governed over. Kim Coco Iwamoto [centered her campaign on good governance reform](#) like [publicly financed elections and ending pay-to-play](#), and populist economic issues like [rent relief](#).

If that wasn't history-making enough, Iwamoto is also the [first "out" transgender elected official in Hawai'i's history](#), winning popular support at a time when transgender and LGBTQ+ rights have been under attack in the US and gender identity has become the center of a culture war.

"The media made clear that my campaign was a referendum on good governance reform vs the status quo, and that's how my victory should be viewed," said **Kim Coco Iwamoto, the Democratic Nominee for Hawaii House District 25 who unseated the 30 year incumbent and 7 year House Speaker Scott Saiki.** "I wasn't just running against the Speaker, I was running against the entire Democratic establishment. Just look at the donors to the Speaker and the other corporate- and establishment-backed candidates who lost their races last night. I hope that my victory inspires more people in Hawai'i and around the world to run people-powered campaigns focused on the issues that matter to everyday people. With persistence and hard work, you can defeat giants."

"Kim Coco Iwamoto is the first person in the history of the United States to defeat an incumbent Democratic Speaker of a State House in a Primary," said **Evan Weber, a co-founder and organizer with Our Hawai'i, who first backed Kim Coco Iwamoto in her 2022 campaign and faced public retaliation from Speaker Saiki as a result.** "She did it running on an agenda to end corruption and promote good government, and because of that she will be known here in Hawai'i — and around the world — as the Speaker Slayer. We're hoping Hawai'i House Democrats will follow the lead of the electorate and come together to choose a Speaker who represents change, not the status quo."

**Kim Coco Iwamoto headlines a group of candidates that won upset victories over the political establishment** including Our Hawai'i backed candidates and those who have taken The "[Our Hawai'i Pledge](#)" to **reject corporate PAC, lobbyist, and special interest money and back a progressive populist agenda**, including:

- **Ikaika Lardizabal Hussey** a Native Hawaiian clean energy entrepreneur and labor organizer who *defeated the spouse of an 18-year incumbent and the former House Vice-Speaker John Mizuno by an almost 22 point margin while being outraised and outspent*;
- **Tina Nakada Grandinetti** an Okinawan community organizer, public policy expert, and housing advocate who *defeated a candidate backed by the incumbent who had been in office for 46-years, Bertrand Kobayashi, as well as the other local representatives of the district, and was significantly outspent by*; and
- **Former Congressman Kai Kahele** led his race for Office of Hawaiian Affairs by 17 points after a 2022 anti-establishment challenge for Governor against then-Lieutenant Governor Josh Green, and [\*intentionally raised and spent no money in this campaign\*](#).

"This is a model for Democrats nationwide. From Kamala Harris to Kim Coco, we're seeing that people are ready to vote for a new generation of leaders and reject corporate-aligned policies," said **Kaniela Ing, co-founder of Our Hawai'i, 3-term Hawai'i legislator, and national director of the Green New Deal Network where his organization has endorsed Kamala Harris for President**. "When voters were given the chance to vote for change and a populist economic agenda in Hawai'i's election, they did. If Democrats replicate that result, and Our Hawai'i's model of supporting candidates to reject corporate influence, they can win big in November."

Incoming Representatives hope Hawai'i's Democratic leadership will heed voters' will.

"The results in my race in Honolulu and others across Hawai'i in this election make clear that Hawai'i's voters are ready for a new generation of leadership," said **Hawai'i House District 20 Democratic Nominee Tina Nakada Grandinetti**. "In a crowded House race in an economically diverse district, voters chose a progressive vision centered on meeting the needs of working families and protecting the lands and waters that sustain us. People are ready for change and fresh perspectives, and myself and others are ready to serve."

"When I am in office I plan to work every day to make sure that the will of the voters expressed in my race in Kalihi last night results in real change they can feel and see," added **Hawai'i House District 29 Democratic Nominee Ikaika Lardizabal Hussey**. "I hope that my soon-to-be colleagues will join me in this turn from the status quo — from the bills we introduce, to who we select as our next Speaker. If Democrats want to be successful, we have to be the party of change and new ideas."

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*Our Hawai'i is building a movement to create a Hawai'i that puts kama'āina and kānaka maoli — not big money interests — first. Grounded in our past, looking towards our future, and rooted in shared values of aloha, kuleana, and mālama pono. We educate, organize, advocate, and engage in elections to expose the corruption and complacency holding our islands back and advance an agenda to make Hawai'i work for all of us, not just the wealthy few.*

## APPENDIX 1:

### PREVIOUS STATE HOUSE SPEAKER DEFEATS IN US HISTORY

*Analysis by Our Hawai'i Action*

State House Speakers are rarely defeated while in office due to their significant influence, but there have been instances where they have lost elections or been removed from power. Below is a chronological list of notable cases where state House Speakers were defeated, lost their positions, or faced significant challenges, along with the causes of their defeat:

#### 1. Thomas "Tip" O'Neill (Massachusetts, 1948)

- **Cause of Defeat:** Tip O'Neill, then Speaker of the Massachusetts House, ran for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives and lost the US Congress Democratic primary. This defeat was not in his role as Speaker but during his campaign for a different office.

#### 2. Michael Madigan (Illinois, 1994)

- **Cause of Defeat:** Madigan, one of the longest-serving House Speakers in U.S. history, lost his Speakership when Republicans took control of the Illinois House in the 1994 midterm elections. Although he was re-elected to his seat, he lost the Speaker position due to his party losing the majority.

#### 3. Tom Craddick (Texas, 2009)

- **Cause of Defeat:** Craddick was removed as Speaker by his own party members in the Texas House due to internal dissatisfaction with his leadership style. He was not defeated in a general election but lost the Speaker position through a party vote.

#### 4. Pat Murphy (Iowa, 2010)

- **Cause of Defeat:** Murphy, the Democratic Speaker of the Iowa House, lost his re-election bid in the 2010 general election during a Republican wave. His defeat was due to the broader political shift in his district and across the state.

#### 5. Bobby Harrell (South Carolina, 2014)

- **Cause of Defeat:** Harrell, the Speaker of the South Carolina House, was forced to resign after pleading guilty to ethics violations. His resignation was the result of legal troubles rather than an electoral defeat.

#### 6. Stephen Shurtleff (New Hampshire, 2020)

- **Cause of Defeat:** Shurtleff, the Democratic Speaker of the New Hampshire House, lost his seat in the 2020 general election. This loss was largely due to the political shift in his district, reflecting broader national trends.

#### 7. Kurt Daudt (Minnesota, 2018)

- **Cause of Defeat:** Daudt, the Republican Speaker of the Minnesota House, lost his Speakership when Democrats took control of the House in the 2018 midterm elections. Although he retained his legislative seat, his party's loss of the majority led to him losing the Speaker position.

#### 8. Tom Craddick (Texas, 2018)

- **Cause of Challenge:** Craddick, a former Speaker, faced a serious challenge in the Republican primary during his time in the Texas House of Representatives. Although he was not defeated in the primary, he eventually chose to retire. This example highlights the internal party dynamics that can challenge even powerful figures.

#### Summary of Causes of Defeat

- **Internal Party Revolts:** Tom Craddick (Texas, 2009) Republican
- **Electoral Defeat in General Elections:** Pat Murphy (Iowa, 2010), Stephen Shurtleff (New Hampshire, 2020)
- **Loss of Party Majority:** Michael Madigan (Illinois, 1994), Kurt Daudt (Minnesota, 2018)
- **Legal or Ethical Issues:** Bobby Harrell (South Carolina, 2014)
- **Primary Challenges in Different Office Campaigns:** Tip O'Neill (Massachusetts, 1948)