

appreciative of the tremendous effort put forth by Nelson Befitel and the HIOSH program. We fully support his department's efforts to work collaboratively with the business community and will continue to work with him toward our common goal of a safer workplace in Hawaii.

MICHAEL J. CHENG
President, WorkComp Hawaii

HIOSH not 'too friendly'

This is in response to the editorial headed, "Friendly is fine, but workplace safety is first" (PBN, Sept. 3).

The piece seems to attack state Labor Director Nelson Befitel's methodology in striving to improve the way [the Hawaii Occupational Safety and Health division] ensures workplace safety. "When minor problems are identified ... the business is given time to fix the issue and there is no citation if things are resolved."

This is "too friendly"?

As recently as 2000, the state's attitude in achieving workplace-safety compliance by the state's business owners reflected Gestapo-type pressure. The following is from the minutes of the Small Business Regulatory Review Board meeting of July 20, 2000. It refers to Jennifer Shishido, then

HIOSH administrator, speaking about the extent to which HIOSH had discretion in issuing penalties for noncompliance:

"Penalties must be sufficient to deter noncompliance. Inspections must be without warning."

And many wonder why the state's business environment was considered unfriendly in the national picture. HIOSH's burn-and-pillage tactics were ineffective, serving only to drive businesses out of business — and employees out of work.

Today, the methodology is to discover noncompliance, issue warnings, explain what must be done to achieve compliance, and provide time for changes to be made without penalty. It's working.

With friendlier tactics (and fewer inspectors), HIOSH has increased its inspections and consultation visits. In 2003, workers' compensation claims decreased by 1,089.

The administration's initiatives obviously are, as characterized by Director Befitel, "effective in improving the working conditions of our working families, and that is what really counts."

PBN's editorial challenging HIOSH's new "friendly" tactics has no basis and simply doesn't make any sense.

BEV HARBIN
President/CEO,

Employers' Chamber of Commerce

Speaking on his own

In reference to the Sept. 3 article "Is the state watchdog too friendly?" WorkComp Insurance Co., Inc. would like to clarify its position by stating that the views expressed by Jim Peck do not represent those of the company.

For the record, WorkComp Hawaii is