

**SGI-USA HAWAII HOSTS CONGRESSIONAL FORUM
BY JOANNE TACHIBANA
HAWAII BUREAU CHIEF**

The Year 2000 Non-partisan Congressional Forum, held at the SGI-USA Hawaii Culture Center, featured the incumbent State of Hawaii's congressional members, the Honorable Patsy T. Mink and the Honorable Neil Abercrombie and their challengers: Mike Gabbard, Gladys Hayes, Philip Myers, James Donovan and Russ Francis. The forum, themed "The United Nations: Its Impact in Hawaii and the Asia Pacific Region," was sponsored by the United Nations Association (UNA-USA Hawaii Division). It was a unique opportunity to meet and hear firsthand from the candidates in a neutral setting.

Nearly 200 community members filled the Ikeda Auditorium, which provided an impressive backdrop for the forum. The stage was bedecked with the United Nations flag and the flags of its 188 member states and provided an international setting for the event.

A video presenting the history of the United Nations and local UNA events set the tone for the evening. Each candidate was given seven minutes to speak on the issues outlined and another two minutes to offer further comment. The audience submitted a wide range of written questions, affording the candidates one more opportunity to provide insight into their stand on international issues.

The forum was filmed by the local community public access TV station, OLELO. The two-hour program will be shown statewide throughout the month of August, giving the viewing audience a chance to hear from their congressional candidates in the comfort of their homes.

This event was co-sponsored by a number of civil society groups, including the League of Women Voters, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Hawaii Alliance for Human Rights, Hawaii Pacific University (International Studies Division), Soroptimists International of Waikiki, Pacific Asia Council of Indigenous Peoples, the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, as well as the Hawaii Association of International Buddhists.

To top off the evening, everyone was invited to add their names to Manifesto 2000. In celebrating the International Year for the Culture of Peace, United Nations Economic, Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is spearheading a 100,000,000-signature worldwide drive of ordinary citizens to commit themselves to be responsible for the future of humanity. This message of peace will be presented to the United Nations General Assembly in September. Each person can sign up at www.unesco.org/manifesto2000. The manifesto is endorsed by SGI President Ikeda and described in his 2000 Peace Proposal.