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Chamber embraces Lingle

**The governor vows more laws
that are favorable to business**

By Bruce Dunford
Associated Press

Within minutes of taking over as the new chairman of the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii on Thursday, AIG Hawaii President and CEO Robin Campaniano made it clear the annual meeting's keynote speaker, Republican Gov. Linda Lingle, was on friendly turf. The insurance company executive did so by taking a swipe at prior Democratic state administrations.

Campaniano noted that Lingle had observed some small AIG-logo gifts when she sat down at the head table and remarked: "You must be doing well."

"I felt a little reservation, because had that conversation taken place with the prior administration, as it did, I would have felt extremely uncomfortable, because the idea of businesses doing well was something that perhaps was not appreciated by the prior administrations," he said.

It was a revealing remark, considering Campaniano was state insurance commissioner

under former Democratic Gov. John Waihee and was named by former Democratic Gov. Ben Cayetano as a member of the Hawaii Stadium Authority.

"I clapped when I heard it," said Sen. Fred Hemmings (R, Lanikai-Waimanalo), the Senate's minority leader.

Campaniano went on to describe Lingle's 7-month-old administration as being one that is "refreshingly helpful and sympathetic to the needs of Hawaii's business community." Lingle said she needs the Chamber's help in improving the business climate through passing new laws, repealing bad laws and taking administrative actions.

Steps are being taken to reduce business registration fees, facilitating "one stop" online registrations, licensing, required filings and tax paying "from anywhere in the world," she said.

The governor focused on changes she said her administration is making in the regulation of workplace environment by the state's Occupational Safety and Health Division, or HIOSH, which "I think has been a thorn in the side of business."

"We want to make certain that under all circumstances that we protect employees in this state," Lingle said. "We want a safe workplace, but that's exactly what you want. The way HIOSH has conducted itself in the past is as if only they want a safe workplace and all of you are out there trying to create unsafe conditions and we're going to get you because you won't do the right thing, and that attitude has to change."

She said the arbitrary enforcement of unclear regulations for workplace safety has to stop because it hinders the creation of jobs.

Instead of issuing a no-fine citation on the first violation, creating a mandatory "repeated offender" fine on any subsequent violations, the administration plans to issue warning letters for minor infractions, she said.

"We want to become known as a consultation agency rather than an enforcement agency in order to ensure workplace safety," Lingle said. "We think it's a better approach."