Hawaii: Influence Of Democratic Senator Mazie K. Hirono

Hawaii is home to a multitude of things: volcanoes, beautiful tourist areas, and Democratic Senator, Mazie K. Hirono. Her life has been full of highs and lows that have molded her political beliefs and personality. As she works hard to make a mark in society that people will remember for years to come, she passes bills and approves legislature in hopes to make Hawaii a better place for all its residents and tourists alike. Mazie’s life and home state both contain a story that deserves to be told.

Once an immigrant with only the clothes on her back and the support from her family, Mazie K. Hirono now serves as a Democratic senator to the only state that is composed entirely of islands: Hawaii. She began serving and working in public office in 1980, starting her political career as a state representative in the House. Despite not being born in Hawaii, she considers the state to be her home. Mazie works tirelessly to pass bills and legislature that best benefits those who are often overlooked: children, veterans, and tourism. Hirono would not be able to make it this far without donations from her many supporters. (Hirono 'About Mazie: Mazie K. Hirono - A Voice for Hawai'i in the U.S. Senate')

Mazie Hirono spent much of her childhood living on her grandparent’s rice farm in Fukushima, Japan. Her mother had sent her there because she wanted a better life for Mazie than what she and her husband could provide. After all, her husband was an alcoholic and a compulsive gambler. He had even sold some of their family possessions to feed his addiction. Mazie says she owes much of her success and determination to her mother, for being courageous enough to escape to Hawaii when she was eight. Without her mother’s bravery to travel across the Pacific Ocean, she knew she would not be where she is today. (Hirono 'About Mazie: Mazie K. Hirono - A Voice for Hawai'i in the U.S. Senate')

After Mazie, her mother, and her brother boarded the boat to Hawaii, they struggled to make a proper living. Her mother had to keep up with two jobs and raising two children in a completely new world. Mazie spent the rest of her schooling years in public school, and she was in awe of authors like Pamela Lyndon Travers, who inspired her profound love of reading. She later went on to attend university at the University of Hawaii. (Hirono 'About Mazie: Mazie K. Hirono - A Voice for Hawai'i in the U.S. Senate')

During her enrollment there, she spent much of her free time doing public service. She volunteered to tutor and helped at the local mental health hospital often. Also while she was in college, she protested the Vietnam War. This sparked her interest in politics and allowed her to see the way the nation runs differently. The combination of taking part in protests and volunteering made her realize that even those who are shunned by society should always have a public voice and opinion, and it effectively spurred her aspiration to become a woman of the people. Her protesting and volunteer work were only the beginning of her life of servitude to Hawaii. (Hirono 'About Mazie: Mazie K. Hirono - A Voice for Hawai'i in the U.S. Senate')

After graduating from the University of Hawaii in 1970, she went to the Georgetown University Law Center, because she saw that their clinical law program would be most beneficial for her goal to become an advocate for others. Post-graduation, Mazie worked for the Hawaii attorney

general’s office in the antitrust division. Even though she wanted to help the people as best as she could, she had never considered running for a political office. She touches on this subject in her online biography on her website by stating, “Although prior to law school I had helped many others run for office, I had not thought about becoming a candidate myself. However, with the encouragement of others, I successfully ran for a seat in the Hawaii House of Representatives in 1980.” This was only the beginning of her political career.

As a representative, she strove towards safety and protection for Hawaiian workers and consumers alike. She served in the house for over a decade before being elected to an even greater office: the lieutenant governor of Hawaii. Maize served as lieutenant governor for eight years, working to improve life for all walks of life in Hawaii. From insurance, childhood education, and tour visa reforms, she did a lot for the people during her two terms. (Hirono 'About Mazie: Mazie K. Hirono - A Voice for Hawai'i in the U.S. Senate'). In 2004, although she was no longer a Representative, she founded the Patsy T. Mink PAC to help fund other women’s campaigns for office. This PAC emphasizes helping pro-choice Democratic women run for and stay in office ('Patsy T. Mink PAC').

Mazie was elected to Congress in 2006, taking the same seat Patsy once did during her life. She continued to support and work towards education reforms, equality, and improving Hawaii’s tourism among other things. It was 2013, shortly after the retirement of former senator Daniel Akaka, when she was elected to be one of the U.S. Senators from Hawaii. (Hirono 'About Mazie: Mazie K. Hirono - A Voice for Hawai'i in the U.S. Senate')

Today, she serves as a Senator for Hawaii as a member of the following five committees: Armed Services, Energy and Natural Resources, Judiciary, Small Business and Entrepreneurship, and Veterans’ Affairs ('Sen. Mazie Hirono'). Mazie prides herself on the work she does through the committees she has been assigned to, and she constantly works towards doing the best she can her state, from promoting clean energy use to make life easier for veterans, small business owners, and school-age children alike. (Hirono 'About Mazie: Mazie K. Hirono - A Voice for Hawai'i in the U.S. Senate')

Geographically speaking, Hawaii is a bit different from the typical states in the union. Hawaii is composed entirely of 132 islands and does not touch any other state in the United States. There are eight major islands, and the rest of them are primarily atolls. Hawaii is host to many volcanoes, some of which are still active and create new land. While Hawaii has no sizable rivers, there are hundreds of streams that flow from the top of volcanic summits down into the surrounding land and sea. The state also has many other beautiful, natural landforms such as lush valleys, breathtaking canyons, and beautiful waterfalls. ('Hawaii Geography' 2017)

Approximately 1.4 million citizens call Hawaii home. In terms of land size, it is the 40th largest state at 10,931 square miles in the union with one of the biggest population densities. The biggest island is Oahu, which has about 67% (953,207) of the total Hawaiian population. The following islands are listed from largest to smallest in population size: Hawaii, Maui, Kauai, Molokai, Lenai, and Niihai. Of all eight islands, one island, Kahoolawe, is unpopulated according to the 2010 census. Honolulu is the capital and the only city with a population exceeding 50,000. ('Hawaii Population 2019 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs)')

Of those 1.4 million residents, 106,630 of them are veterans. This accounts for approximately .08 percent of the population, a small yet important number to Hirono. Hawaii also has nearly

equal percentages of males of females, as there are only .4 percent more males than females. Only about half of Hawaii's population was born in Hawaii itself, and interestingly enough there are absolutely no ethnic groups that are considered a majority from the state. This is because Hawaii is extremely diverse, which no race besides Asian surpassing thirty-five percent of the total population. A significant number of Hawaiians, approximately 63%, are Christian based. Hirono is part of the minuscule ten percent of the state that does not follow a religion based upon Christianity. ('Hawaii Population 2019 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs)')

In terms of economics, Hawaii's economy is dependant on the relationship that the U.S. economy has with other international economies, most notably Japan. This is primarily due to Hawaii's excellent tourism industry, as well as its current labor market conditions. Its economy is projected to experience growth in the next year, as well as growth in personal income by 2.9 percent and tax revenue for its citizens. Although Hawaii's economy is expected to grow and that it has a relatively low unemployment rate, it does not look good when compared to the economies of other states ('Outlook for the Economy' 2019). For example, Hawaii is currently the top in America for two statistics: the highest cost of living and the highest poverty rate in the United States. It is estimated that out of every six children under the age of five, one of them lives in poverty (Petranik 'Hawaii's Overall Economy').

Hirono mostly sponsors bills that deal with Armed Forces and National Security, Health, and Immigration ('Sen. Mazie Hirono'). She has sponsored the following bills in the 115th congressional session, all dealing with the above-mentioned topics in their respective order:

Bill S.3419 is under the Veterans' Affairs Committee, introduced in Senate on September 6th, 2018. This bill essentially extends the amount of time certain programs will run. These programs include, but are not limited to, homeless veteran reintegration programs, care for mentally ill veterans, and financial assistance for low-income veteran families ('S.3419 - 115th Congress (2017-2018): Keeping Our Commitment to Ending Veteran Homelessness Act of 2018' 2018).

Bill S.1650 is under the Health Committee, as well as the Education, Labor, and Pension committees. It was initially introduced on July 27th, 2017 in the 115th congressional session. By sponsoring this bill, Hirono has advocated the usage of grants to provide marginalized youth better access to sexual health services. Many organizations are eligible to receive these grants, such as schools or hospitals. However, these grants should only be used to provide and promote proper sexual health care in young individuals, not to provide access to unsafe medical practice or promote gender stereotypes ('S.1650 - 115th Congress (2017-2018): Youth Access to Sexual Health Services Act of 2017' 2017).

The final area of interest listed is immigration, and Hirono has sponsored Bill S.2468 that deals in this area. Bill S.2468 gives adult and minor aliens, access to a lawyer at the expense of the government. It also gives them the right to examine their files and the documents therein. The bill also states that Homeland Security Department must provide all aliens in detention facilities with access to legal counsel ('S.2468 - 115th Congress (2017-2018): Fair Day in Court for Kids Act of 2018' 2018).

Hirono has raised $4,482,705 in total for her political campaign. A large number of contributors have helped her reach this staggering amount. Her top contributors are EMILY's List, donating a total of $52,000 to the senator. Next is Matson Inc, at $31,846 and Kobayashi, Sugita, & Goda at $31,050. The biggest industry that donates to her are lawyers/law firms, which make up

nearly twelve percent of her total fundraising funds (Rivera 'Sen. Mazie K Hirono - Campaign Finance Summary').

Based on several interviews I have watched and read about, as well as the bills I researched for this paper, I have come to the following conclusions. Mazie K. Hirono’s beliefs are extremely synonymous with those of major Democratic speakers and politicians, which would make sense seeing that she is a democratic senator for Hawaii. She has made absolutely no secret during written interviews or news segments that she is not a fan of the current President of the United States, Donald Trump. She has also made her stances on issues such as healthcare, educational reforms, and her opinion on the #MeToo movement well known to the public. Personally, my beliefs fall in between the conservative nature of the Republican party and the liberal beliefs of the Democrats. I do agree with Hirono on some things, such as the way that the #MeToo movement sheds light on survivors of sexual assault and her belief that veterans should get proper benefits and recognition from the U.S. Government. I, however, do not agree with her on her beliefs for limiting the number of bullets a gun magazine can carry. For the most part, I agree with many of the bills she has passed and many of the votes she has made, but I disagree with some of the things she has said during interviews. Much of what she says during live interviews seems very biased at times when discussing gender-sensitive (or other highly polarized) topics, which I find to be extremely distasteful when you are trying to watch the news and learn facts rather than opinions. In short, most of her proposed policies and bills are agreeable, but I do agree with much of what she says on the news oftentimes, likely because I have a more republican mindset than she, a more extreme Democrat, has.

To sum everything up, Mazie K. Hirono has worked hard to get where she is today. As an immigrant, a woman, and a minority, she has every reason to fight for equality and reforms in the country. She has seen and experienced what it feels like to be in extreme poverty, and she has experienced wealth. It is evident that her background shaped her current political beliefs and helped her become a successful politician. She might not be one hundred percent agreeable, but she always seems to have good intentions.