

HAWAII *Energy Marketers Association Report*



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In Hawaii's primary election held on August 13, there were contentious races for governor, lieutenant governor and numerous seats in Hawaii's state legislature. Also, on the line were seats for a U.S. senator, both Hawaii congressional seats, and council races in every county, including the mayors of Kauai and Maui.

Yet, if Hawaii's voter turnout for the primary is a barometer of the degree of civic engagement among Hawaii adults, our state could do better in that department. Just under 40% of Hawaii's registered voters cast their ballots.

Ironically, when Hawaii moved to all mail-in ballots in 2019, the intent was to boost turnout by making voting more convenient and accessible. Unfortunately, that did not occur and, in fact, voter turnout has actually declined.

Voter turnout seemed to have peaked in 2020 — despite being the height of the pandemic when there were lockdowns, stay-at-home orders, and more intensified fear of COVID-19 and its variants. More than 50% of Hawaii's registered voters participated in the primary election that year and nearly 70% voted in the general. Some attribute the high turnout back to voters feeling compelled to vote in the presidential race between Donald Trump and Joe Biden.

As expected, during the 2022 campaigns, many candidates adopted renewable energy as part of their platform. In Hawaii's ongoing quest to shift away from fossil fuels by 2045, renewable energy has become a motherhood and apple pie issue, but few candidates are able to offer concrete ways to create a seamless pathway or offer viable solutions for cost-effective, commercially viable renewable energy such as biofuels that are available on a large scale to meet the state's demand. Renewables, however this may be defined, provides a reliable fallback for candidates pressed by voters disgruntled about high fuel prices.

This landscape in the Aloha State paves the way for Hawaii's fuel suppliers and marketers to step forward to shape the state's energy future. There are opportunities for the private sector to take the lead in shaping policy and laws. The best is yet to come.