



Kahana residents ask Lingle not to veto bill

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At least 75 people rallied at the state Capitol courtyard yesterday to urge Gov. Linda Lingle to sign a bill that allows six families to continue to live in Kahana Valley.

Among the group were disappointed residents and lawmakers who criticized Lingle after they learned House Bill 1552 — which re-authorizes the Department of Land and Natural Resources to issue long-term leases at Ahupuaa o Kahana State Park — was placed on a list of bills that may be vetoed. Lingle has until Wednesday to veto the bill.

The affected families remain at Kahana Valley after they were granted a temporary reprieve from eviction in October 2008. Lena Soliven, a member of one of the six families, said her family was issued month-to-month revocable permits for years while they negotiated a lease for a vacant lot on the land where they planned to build a home.

She was told she met all the criteria, but the state informed her last year that a law that authorizes DLNR to issue such leases expired in 1993.

Her heart sank when she heard the bill was on the possible-veto list, which means potential eviction, but Soliven said she plans to stay put. The arduous process with the state has taken a toll on Soliven's health, but she said she continues to push forward for her children and grandchildren.

Four generations of her family lived in Kahana Valley.

"We're not moving," she said. "We will always continue to fight for one another so we can continue to stay on this land that belongs to us. This is the land that we love. This is the land of our ancestors."

She called for legislators to override Lingle's veto if the governor decides to do so. A majority of legislators voted in favor of the bill during this year's legislative session.

Rep. Jessica Wooley, who represents Laie, Hauula and Punaluu, said, "(Lingle) has forgotten about the families, forgotten about the land and ancestral ties to the land."

Lingle said yesterday that there's a problem in a section of the bill. "The bill sets up a situation where even if someone breaks the law in one of those areas, they could not be evicted. We cannot allow that to happen in a state facility," she said.

"If they fix that, it could be something I could accept. We can't allow people to break the law and still remain in the state parks," Lingle added.