

Kaua'i goes rogue, anti-GMO bill passed over mayor's veto, contentious legal fight imminent

As the GLP's Jon Entine reports in [Forbes](#), a Kaua'i County Council member selected less than 24 hours earlier because of his known opposition to crop biotechnology provided the deciding vote on Saturday to override the county mayor's veto of a bill its supporters hope will deal a fatal blow to agri-businesses on Hawaii.

The 5-2 vote means that Bill 2491, which requires large farms and agribusinesses to disclose pesticide use and growth of genetically modified crops, is now law. Critical government officials and bill opponents noted that the bill focuses solely on one industry and does not set spraying restrictions, disclosure requirements or buffer zones on pest control companies, homeowners, hotels, golf courses and the county itself which together use more than 85% of pesticides on Kaua'i. The county is also required to set up a committee to study whether pesticides are harming the environment or the health of residents. The regulations will take effect in nine months—if they survive a likely legal challenge.

The vote by Mason Chock, a favorite of the antis, who was selected on Friday to fill a vacancy on the council, was the difference maker. The council normally has seven members but has been down one for weeks since Nadine Naka-mura resigned to become Kauai County managing director.

Chock's rushed selection on Friday and his Saturday vote capped a week of intrigue that raises numerous ethical and legal issues. The new council member was not elected by popular vote. Rather, the anti block chose him over a former council member who came in eighth in the last election, just short of being elected. In short, a person hand selected by the fierce opponents of crop biotechnology got to cast the deciding vote on whether one of the most controversial agricultural bill's in Hawaii's history would become law.

For the moment, the mayor is being conciliatory, although he said after the vote that a legal challenge is all but certain. "While a legal challenge is expected, and that may prevent us from immediately implementing 2491, I can assure the public that nothing will stop us from moving forward as quickly as possible with the public health study, working with the state to ensure the voluntary program gets off the ground in a timely manner, and lobbying the legislature for additional resources for enforcement on Kauai," he said in a written statement issued shortly after the council's decision.

What's the backstory and the latest twists in this bizarre saga?

Read the full, original story here: ["Fix Is In On Anti-GMO Bill As Kaua'i Goes Rogue, Setting Hawaii County On Path To Legal Conflagration"](#)

Additional Resources

- ["A Sad Day for Science and Agriculture in Hawaii"](#), Hawaii Farmer's Daughter
- ["Kauai's GMO and Pesticide Bill Is Set to Become Law After Veto Override,"](#) Civil Beat