

**Star Advertiser Article by Richard Borreca**  
**Published January 26, 2025**

*Hawaii's high cost of living underscores perennial problem of housing for governor*

Congratulations Hawaii, we are No. 1. The ranking is probably one honor we will not want to claim, because it is for the highest cost of living among the 50 states.

The latest figures show Hawaii's with a composite cost of living index of 188.4, with 100 being the average across the entire country.

This information was gathered by the Council for Community & Economic Research, a national organization that calculates the cost of living.

More bad news: not only is Hawaii the most expensive, the accounting shows that Hawaii's cost of living is rising slightly, compared to past reports.

The only good portion of the tally is that there has been a drop in the cost of health care and transportation expenses.

Still, according to Payscale, an American compensation software and data company, not only is Hawaii an expensive place to live, there is actually no state higher.

Those rising costs bar entry to thousands of people who want to live here, and the mortgages already paid by local residents put a ceiling on any real savings for those already living here. The figures add up to a punishing economic reality for living in Hawaii.

It seems like so long ago - but it was just back in November of 2022 that Gov. Josh Green named Nani Medeiros to be the state's new housing chief.

Back in 2023, Green envisioned using \$400 million deposited into the state's rental housing trust fund to develop rental units, with another \$500 million going to the dwelling unit revolving fund to solve the housing problems.

Pronouncements of solutions to be, though, are just words and don't solve the problems of the day. Shortly after her appointment, Medeiros resigned, as Green blamed a barrage of personal attacks for her resignation.

Not leaving, however, was Hawaii's housing crisis.

Green finds that he is another in a long series of governors who have gone to battle the housing dilemma.

I remember writing that "Gov. Linda Lingle in 2005 assembled a housing task force bristling with housing hot shots from industry and government" - and even further back in 1991, about Gov. John Waihee breaking ground on a series of state-subsidized homeless villages.

Presented by Commissioner Margery Bronster  
1/27/2025 COS Meeting

Despite tens of thousands of units set for completion over the next decade, Green's self-congratulatory claim that "we have delivered the most significant housing regulatory and zoning reforms in over 40 years - cutting red tape, updating and improving rental laws, and increasing the affordable housing inventory statewide," pales when you look at the state's long history of housing battles.

Still no governor will go before the Legislature saying, "I give up, housing is too tough a task."

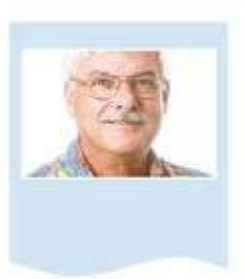
Instead governor after governor recruits the bright new experts, points them at the problem and issues the call to battle.

The great power for Green and those before him are not in proclaiming victory, but in the ability to set their own agendas. Including housing in the list of Hawaii needs is the right thing to do.

If no victory can be claimed, at least the horse and rider are going in the right direction.

--- *Richard Barreca writes on politics on Sundays. Reach him at [808onpolitics@gmail.com](mailto:808onpolitics@gmail.com).*

ON POLITICS



RICHARD

BORRECA

---

[Copyright \(c\)2025 Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Edition 1/26/2025](#)  
[powered by TECNAVIA](#)

---

Sunday, 01/26/2025 Page .E01

Copyright (c)2025 Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Edition 1/26/2025