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Damon Key Director Mark M. Murakami Takes the Reins as 2025 HSBA President

Damon Key Director Mark M. Murakami took his oath of office as the 2025 Hawaii State Bar Association (HSBA) President at the organization’s annual meeting in December 2024. Hawaii’s attorneys selected Mark for this leadership role in a statewide election in late 2022. He subsequently served as the 2023 Vice President and 2024 President-Elect.

Founded in 1899, the HSBA is a mandatory professional organization for active and inactive licensed attorneys in Hawaii. Its mission is to unite and inspire Hawaii’s lawyers to promote justice, serve the public and improve the legal profession. Mark was first elected by his peers to the 21-person HSBA Board in 2012 and was elected Treasurer from 2014 to 2017. He has also been a member of several HSBA sections and co-presented the Real Property and Financial Services Section Real Estate Litigation Update for about a decade.

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Empty Homes Tax Incoming? What you Need to Know

Attorney Kalina Nguyen Le Joins Damon Key

Attorney Logan T. Araki Brings Valuable Insights and Experience to Damon Key

Genki Ala Wai Project

At Damon Key, Mark primarily practices in litigation with a heavy emphasis on real estate, eminent domain, commercial, and probate/trusts. His caseload usually includes one or two maritime cases and corporate work for some small businesses. He has appeared in all federal and state courts in Hawaii, most of the administrative boards and commissions, and is licensed in the U.S. Supreme Court, Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and Court of Federal Claims.

Cultivating Resilience

According to Mark, the HSBA recently prepared a strategic plan to guide its efforts over the next three to five years. As president, his top priorities will be to help the legal industry navigate the generational and technological transitions of the bar, the practice of law, the judiciary, and the legal service market.

“I want to get back to basics to ensure a resilient, efficient, and effective organization. We need to ensure that the critical infrastructure of the association is appropriately resourced and staffed. I also will aim to build up the Board of Directors to ensure that the HSBA has a succession of leaders,” said Mark.

Another of Mark’s priorities is to bolster the legal system’s resilience by dedicating more resources to legal system disaster preparation and response. While the HSBA played a critical role in the Lahaina Wildfire response, he would like the association to be even better prepared for the next disaster.

Mark also points out that the aging of the bar will create an opportunity to help provide better transitions of law practices and clients than exists today. Comparing the numbers of senior member retirements to new admittees, the legal system has experienced a net decrease in attorneys over the past five years. Additional goals include providing greater support to solo and small firm attorneys and breaking down barriers for government attorneys to participate in HSBA roles and pro bono activities.

Equipped to Lead

Born on Maui and raised on Oahu, Mark attended public schools in Kailua and graduated from Kailua High School, where he performed in the marching and concert bands, had a passion for theater and dabbled in sports.

Mark graduated Valedictorian of the Class of 1999 from the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawaii. He is also a graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. Mark served 13 years on active duty before joining the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve in 2005. In 2022, he retired as a Captain, culminating thirty years of active duty and reserve commissioned service.

Beyond providing superior legal counsel to his clients, Mark is a passionate champion for various professional and community causes. He undertakes pro bono cases for Department of Hawaiian Home Lands beneficiaries and volunteers with the Honolulu District Court self-help center.

Mark represents Hawaii in the Owners’ Counsel of America (OCA), an invitation-only association of elite eminent domain practitioners nationwide. He was recently inducted into the American College of Real Estate Lawyers and has been active in the American Bar Association, for which he co-chairs the Real Estate, Condemnation and Trust Litigation Committee. Mark sits on the Board of Directors of the I’m a Bright Kid Foundation, supporting musical theater and education in Windward Oahu. He is a Lecturer-in-Law at the University of Hawaii, where he teaches Real Property II and Land Use.



Hawaii’s Future-Ready Legal Community

Mark’s wide-ranging experiences and previous successes have prepared him well for his service as HSBA president. With his passion for the legal profession and love of the islands, he welcomes the chance to tackle the challenging issues facing the legal community while preparing for its future.

“Our profession is the critical infrastructure of an ordered society and economy,” added Mark. “I am honored to represent the hard-working HSBA members who provide the sound legal work vital to Hawaii’s diverse communities.”