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Anti-noise warriors regroup

By [Mary Vorsino](#)

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There are few things Gary Holt values more than peace and quiet — and few things he gets less of from his apartment in Waikiki.

"There are motorcycles. There are boom boxes. There are car alarms," Holt said, ticking off the noisemakers that jar him awake night after night. "We know there's going to be noise. There's not much you can do about some of it. My concern is there is a lot of noise. Others are complaining about it, too."

A few months ago, Holt decided to do something about the noise levels and found a few other fed-up residents who wanted to join the fight.

Together, they revived a once-groundbreaking group, called Citizens Against Noise of Hawai'i, which is widely credited with toughening noise laws in the 1970s and 1980s. So far, the organization has about 20 members, a board of directors and a mission: To end unnecessary noise in the Islands.

The group is getting its message out to neighborhood boards, and also is looking to team up with national noise pollution awareness coalition Noise Off.

The formation of the Hawai'i group comes as noise complaints are trending upward on O'ahu. From July 2005 to June 2006, there were 343 complaints about noise islandwide to the state Health Department, up by 26 complaints from the previous fiscal year. Most of the complaints were construction-related.

There were also dozens of complaints about vehicles and loud music.

Cliff Montgomery, president of Citizens Against Noise, said he and his members will first work to become familiar with noise laws in the Islands and then determine how — and how well — they are enforced. Eventually, he said, the group wants to lobby at the state Legislature for additions to the law.

Police Capt. Alan Arita, whose command includes Waikiki, pointed out that many of the noise laws are difficult to enforce. For example, police will respond to a report of a loud muffler, but may have missed the culprit car by minutes.

And loud music ordinances require officers to use their own judgment when handing out citations — a standard that doesn't always stand up in court.

"We don't have sound meters right now," Arita said.

Waikiki police officers have handed out about 150 loud music citations so far this year, and 106 loud muffler citations, Arita said.

Most of the tickets are given as officers walk parts of Waikiki at night.

There are noise laws for everything from aircraft to ice cream trucks in the Islands, many of which are monitored by the state Department of Health. Daryn Yamada, supervisor of the agency's noise division, said his investigators look into most noise complaints or direct residents to other departments.

HUSH-HUSH

For more information on Citizens Against Noise of Hawai'i, go to www.hawaii.canhush.net. The organization also runs a blog at www.hawaiicanbequiet.wordpress.com.

To file a noise complaint or to get information on noise laws, call the state Department of Health's noise division at 586-4700.

Police respond to vehicle noise complaints, while the Hawaiian Humane Society handles animal noise and the Honolulu Liquor Commission monitors noise from bars. If in doubt, he said, residents should check with his office or police.

Montgomery said most of his organization's members live in Waikiki or elsewhere in urban Honolulu, where traffic and bar noise are the biggest concerns. Others come from Waipahu and Waikele, he said.

Montgomery wants to eventually take the organization state-wide.

The first Citizens Against Noise started in the Islands in 1970, amid a construction and population boom. It shut down in 1988.

At its height, the nonprofit had more than 1,000 dues-paying members and ran a noise complaint hot line for residents. The late Joan Hayes, who was a state representative and lobbyist, founded the organization and served as its chairwoman for years.

The group was instrumental in shaping noise laws on O'ahu and statewide, from those governing construction to parties to helicopters.

It also raised awareness about the law, publishing pamphlets and a comic book.

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