

TONGA M. JENSEN AHOKOVI

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EDUCATION

University of Hawaii at Mānoa

2021-2024

B.A. Economics (*cum laude*) – Quantitative Economics Concentration

Research Interests: Applied Microeconomics, Machine Learning Applications in Economics,
Labor Economics, Urban Economics, Public Economics, Economic History.

Relevant Coursework:

Mathematics: Differential, Integral, and Multivariable Calculus (Calculus I-III), Linear Algebra,
Advanced Mathematics (methods of proof, naive set theory, axiomatic systems).

Economics: Econometrics I (PhD level), Econometrics I-II (UG sequence), Mathematical Economics
(linear programming & optimization), Intermediate Micro- & Macroeconomic Theory,
Advanced Directed Research w/ Prof. Dylan Moore.

Statistics & Data Science: Machine Learning Methods, Intro. Statistics, Data Analysis & Visualization.

Honors & Awards:

Member, Omicron Delta Epsilon Economics Honor Society,
Member, Pi Gamma Mu International Honor Society in Social Sciences,
Dean's List, College of the Social Sciences,
HEA Scholarship Recipient, Hawaii Economic Association,
Pipeline Scholar, American Real Estate & Urban Economics Association.
Don Lavoie Fellow (Spring '25), Mercatus Center

Professional Affiliations

Student Member, National Association for Business Economics,
Student Member, Hawaii Economic Association,
Founding Member & Director of Professional Development, Mānoa Economics Association.

Iolani School

2015-2021

H.S. Diploma

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Computer Languages

R, Stata, and Python.

Packages & Libraries

ggplot2, dplyr, tidyverse, tidyr, tidycensus, sandwich, plm, zoo, AER, data.table,
NumPy, pandas, Matplotlib, SciPy, scikit-learn, Keras, Jupyter Notebook.

Software

LaTeX, ArcGIS, Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Word, & PowerPoint).

Languages

English (Fluent), French, and Tongan (Conversational).

WORKING PAPERS

Taxation-Induced Tenancy: Evidence from Washington D.C. (sole author)

July 2024

Accepted conference paper at the '24 *National Tax Association Annual Conference on Taxation*, Detroit, MI.

Presented at the '24 *North American Meeting of the Urban Economics Association*, Georgetown University, DC.

Abstract: Vacancy taxation is gaining popularity as a policy tool to address affordable housing shortages and promote urban revitalization. Despite this growing interest, there is a notable gap in the literature assessing the effectiveness of the policy. This paper is the first to examine the effects of vacancy taxation in the context of the United States, and capitalizes on a significant policy change – a major property tax reform in Washington D.C. – as a natural experiment. Employing a combination of standard and novel synthetic event study designs, I find evidence that the policy precipitated a large reduction in residential vacancies and an increase in occupied housing units.

The Supply Effects of Rent Control: New Evidence from New York (sole author)

October 2023

Abstract: This paper employs a synthetic difference-in-differences design to investigate the impact of a major policy change in New York's rent control law, as measured by the number of new private residential housing units authorized by permits. Contrary to arguments in favor of rent control as a mechanism to mitigate rising housing costs, I find a significant decrease in the number of housing units authorized following the policy change under study. This reduction is most pronounced in the multifamily housing sector.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

This section features research projects where I contributed as a research assistant. My involvement included collaborating on research design, managing and cleaning data, performing analyses, applying statistical and econometric methods, and assisting with copy editing.

Aid for Incumbents: The Electoral Consequences of COVID-19 Relief (NBER WP)

September 2024

Jeffrey Clemens, Julia Payson, and Stan Veuger

Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic led to unprecedented levels of federal aid transfers to state governments. Did this funding increase benefit state incumbents electorally? Identifying the effect of revenue windfalls on economic voting is challenging because whatever conditions led to the influx of cash might also benefit or harm incumbent politicians for a variety of other reasons. We develop an instrument that allows us to predict allocations to states based on variation in congressional representation. We find that incumbents in state-wide races in 2020, 2021, and 2022 performed significantly better in states that received more relief funding due to their over-representation in Congress. These results are robust across specifications and after adjusting for a variety of economic and political controls. We consistently find that the pandemic-period electoral advantage of incumbent politicians in states receiving more aid substantially exceeds the more modest advantage these politicians enjoyed during pre-pandemic elections. This paper contributes to our understanding of economic voting and the incumbency advantage during times of crisis as well as the downstream electoral consequences of both the COVID-19 pandemic and of unequal political representation at the federal level.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Economic Policy Studies, American Enterprise Institute (AEI)

Research Assistant

July '24 – present

Washington, D.C.

- Research assistant to PhD economists [Stan Veuger](#), [Paul Kupiec](#), and [Vincent Smith](#).

University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization (UHERO)

Research Assistant

Nov. '23 – June '24

Honolulu, HI

- Research assistant to PhD economists [Dylan Moore](#), [Peter Fuleky](#), and [Rachel Inafuku](#).
- Contributed to UHERO economists' research, including quarterly economic forecasts and academic research.
- Participated in data collection, analysis, and interpretation using statistical software.

Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

Research Associate

July '21 – Dec. '23

Honolulu, HI

- Employed econometric tools via R to produce research relevant to Hawaii public policy.
- Research contributions cited in publications such as Wall Street Journal and Honolulu Star-Advertiser.
- Engaged in policy analysis and development, focusing on housing affordability.
- Presented research to state and local lawmakers and at public policy forums.

Center for Entrepreneurship & Economic Education

Research Fellow

Aug. – Nov. '23

Honolulu, HI

- Research assistant to PhD economist [Gerard Dericks](#).
- Coauthoring an in-progress academic paper on housing prices and supply restrictions.
- Conducted comprehensive literature reviews and data analysis using R and Excel.
- Contributed to the development of empirical strategy and formal research design.

Urban Land Institute

Institute Scholar

Summer '21 & '22

Honolulu, HI

- Collaborated with fellow participants and experts on urban development projects focusing on workforce housing in Oahu.
- Engaged in community outreach and stakeholder meetings to gather input on housing projects.
- Presented proposals in front of local lawmakers and industry executives.

OTHER EXPERIENCE

TBSE Economics Bridge Program

Ambassador

Jan. – June '24

Honolulu, HI

- Aided and facilitated the transition of students from community college and underrepresented backgrounds to UH Mānoa's economics program.

POLICY REPORTS

<i>Wealth by Association? How Social Networks Drive Inequality in Hawaii.</i> (UHERO Brief)	<i>April '24</i>
<i>The 'empty homes' theory of Hawaii's housing crisis.</i> (Grassroot Institute Policy Brief)	<i>May '23</i>
<i>The 'outsider' theory of Hawaii's housing crisis.</i> (Grassroot Institute Policy Brief)	<i>August '22</i>

WORKS IN PROGRESS

<i>What can 'longest-run' house price indices tell us about the current housing crisis?</i> (with Gerard Dericks)	<i>In progress</i>
<i>Spatio-Temporal Crime Patterns After Proposition 47 in California.</i>	<i>In progress</i>
<i>Estimating the Heterogeneous Effects of the Minimum Wage: Evidence from Hawaii.</i>	<i>In progress</i>

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (INVITED & ATTENDED)

<i>What can 'longest-run' house price indices tell us about the current housing crisis?</i> <i>People, Planet and Prosperity Conference</i> , Chaminade University, Honolulu, HI	<i>August '22</i>
<i>Taxation-Induced Tenancy: A Case Study of Washington D.C.'s Vacancy Tax</i> <i>Undergraduate Showcase</i> (Presented), University of Hawaii at Mānoa, Honolulu, HI	<i>December '23</i>
<i>Pau Hana Kickoff</i> (Presented), Hawaii Economic Association, Honolulu, HI	<i>January '24</i>
<i>National Conference on Undergraduate Research</i> (Invited), The Council for Undergraduate Research, Long Beach, CA	<i>April '24</i>
<i>North American Meeting of the Urban Economics Association</i> (Presented), Washington, DC	<i>September '24</i>
<i>National Tax Association Annual Conference on Taxation</i> (Invited), Detroit, MI	<i>November '24</i>

REFERENCES

Name	Peter Fuleky, PhD	Name	Dylan Moore, PhD
Title	Professor of Economics	Title	Assistant Professor of Economics
Institution(s)	UHERO, UHM	Institution(s)	UHERO, UHM
Email	fuleky@hawaii.edu	Email	dtmoore@hawaii.edu
Phone	(808) 956-7840	Phone	(734) 881-0673
Name	Gerard Dericks, PhD	Name	Rachel Inafuku, PhD
Title	Professor & Director	Title	Research Economist
Institution(s)	CEEE, Hawaii Pacific University	Institution(s)	UHERO
Email	gdericks@hpu.edu	Email	rinafuku@hawaii.edu
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