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Bill Providing V.I. Driver's License and Identification Cards to Undocumented Immigrants Heads to Governor Bryan

Senator Carrion highlights importance of proper insurance and identification for drivers

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Senator Samuel Carrion is the sponsore of Bill No. 35-0013, whose aim is to provide undocumented immigrants with a limited U.S. Virgin Islands driver's license and identification card. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

In a significant move, V.I. lawmakers during Tuesday's extensive session approved a groundbreaking bill that allows for the issuance of local-purpose identification cards and drivers' licenses to residents, without necessitating certain federal documentation.

The bill, known as the Public Safety Driver Act, was championed by Senator Samuel Carrion, who emphasized its role in promoting safer roads. He pointed out that the bill had undergone thorough vetting in two legislative committees and received backing from various government departments, including the Department of Justice, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, the V.I. Police Department, and the Division of Insurance and Banking from the Lieutenant Governor's Office. Mr. Carrion noted that these entities not only supported the bill but also provided valuable recommendations, which were integrated into the final draft.

The consultative process extended to the private sector as well, with contributions from the Insurance Association and community organizations. They expressed how the measure would assist members of their communities in freely transiting on public roads, the senator said.

Mr. Carrion highlighted the importance of driving in the Virgin Islands and the necessity for individuals to be properly insured, covered, and identified. The VIPD also found the measure critical for providing internal identification for drivers.

The bill, now awaiting the governor's signature, is also expected to benefit the territory's economy. It includes a processing fee, which Mr. Carrion believes will generate much-needed revenue and declared the bill a "win for all."

Most lawmakers supported the measure. Senator Milton Potter described it as a "forward-thinking bill," acknowledging its potential to reduce the number of uninsured drivers and improve road safety. Senator Marvin Blyden anticipated an increase in insured drivers and emphasized the bill's role in educating people about road safety and regulations.

Senator Diane Capeheart pointed out the bill's significance for individuals temporarily employed in the territory. However, Senator Novelle Francis acknowledged some controversy around the bill, attributing it to misunderstandings. He highlighted the importance of maintaining records of those using the territory's roadways.

In contrast, Senator Dwayne DeGraff stood as the sole opposition, casting the only no vote against the bill.

The Public Safety Driver Act, having passed the legislative hurdle, now proceeds to the Governor for ratification.