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Bill Establishing USVI's Official Madras Design Approved In Rules Committee; Senators Green-light Board and Commission Nominees

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Model struts during Modern Madras event on St. Croix on Saturday, March 7, 2020. By. CRUSELDA ROBERTS FOR VI CONSORTIUM

The Senate Committee on Rules and Judiciary approved four nominations to government boards and commissions, and OK'd several bills this week, including a measure that establishes the official madras of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The madras measure, sponsored by Senators Myron Jackson, Alicia Barnes and Javan James, describes the official madras design of the USVI to be the following: "A lightweight woven fabric plaid in pattern of yellow, red, argent, (white) pink, azure (blue), turquoise, and vert (green). The

weave may be vertical, horizontal, vertical and horizontal, or diagonal, and each madras for ceremonial territorial use may have the letters “V” and “I” embroidered into the fabric in the color azure (blue), and the letters may not be less than one and one half inch in diameter.” See bill [here](#).

The committee, chaired by Sen. Janelle Sarauw, met Monday at the Capitol Building and agreed to forward each item to the full Senate for further consideration.

The nominees for consideration were Dr. Jerry Smith to serve on the V.I. Government Hospitals and Health Facilities Corporation and the V.I. Board of Physical Therapy in the St. Thomas-St. John District; Dodson James for the V.I. Racing Commission St. Croix District; Jenny Hawkes for the V.I. Board of Career and Technical Education St. Thomas District; and Willard John for the V.I. Port Authority Board in the St. Croix District.

“All the nominees are on boards that are vital to economic development, workforce development, and the healthcare system in the Virgin Islands. Today, we engaged in a robust discussion and I am confident that the nominees will go forth and execute as outlined in the Virgin Islands Code,” Ms. Sarauw said.

Mr. Smith defended his re-nomination, vowing to increase the recruitment of local nurses with competitive compensation, strengthening billing and collections at the hospitals, and to improve the patient care experience. Similarly, Dodson James mentioned that his primary objective for serving on the V.I. Racing Commission is to develop and implement a sustainable breeding program and to fill vacancies for groomers, jockeys, hotwalkers, stable hands and trainers.

Ms. Hawkes stated that her goal is to monitor programs under the V.I. Board of Career and Technical Education to ensure students are positively impacted. Levels of impact are measured by the employment of graduates in the territory and crime reduction. Lastly, Mr. John mentioned that his primary duties will be to review existing projects and initiatives and assist with the development of policies and procedures for the V.I. Port Authority Board.

Separately, policymakers voted favorably for Bill No. 33-0249, which mandates the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Tourism to host an Agricultural symposium known as the V.I. Agricultural Caribbean Symposium, alternating annually on the islands of St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John. “We planted seeds for years to come by mandating that the Dept. of Agriculture hold a conference. To bring this vision into fruition, all stakeholders will meet annually to further improve this industry,” said Sen. Javan James, the bill's sponsor.

Additionally, lawmakers voted and approved the following:

Bill No. 33-0230- An Act to posthumously honor and commend Beulah Smith Harrigan for her service to the children of the Virgin Islands and her role in the development of the library system of our territory and to name the children’s room at the Charles Wesley Turnbull Regional Library in her memory.

Bill No. 33-0242- A Resolution to petition the members of 116th United States Congress to terminate the statutory cap on overall Medicaid funding to the Territory, to eliminate the specific limit of 55 percent on the rate of federal matching funds for Medicaid in the Territory and to provide for the eligibility of the Territory to receive Medicaid disproportionate share hospital payments, so that the Territory can strengthen its Medicaid Program to enroll and provide care for all of the Territory’s residents who are Medicaid eligible and for additional funding to help offset the Territory’s uncompensated care costs.

Bill No. 33-0244- An Act to amend Title 1, chapter 11 of the Virgin Islands Code to declare the month of May as Virgin Islands Mental Health Awareness Month and to assign the responsibilities of increasing mental health awareness and reducing the stigma of mental illness to the Department of Health and the Department of Education.

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