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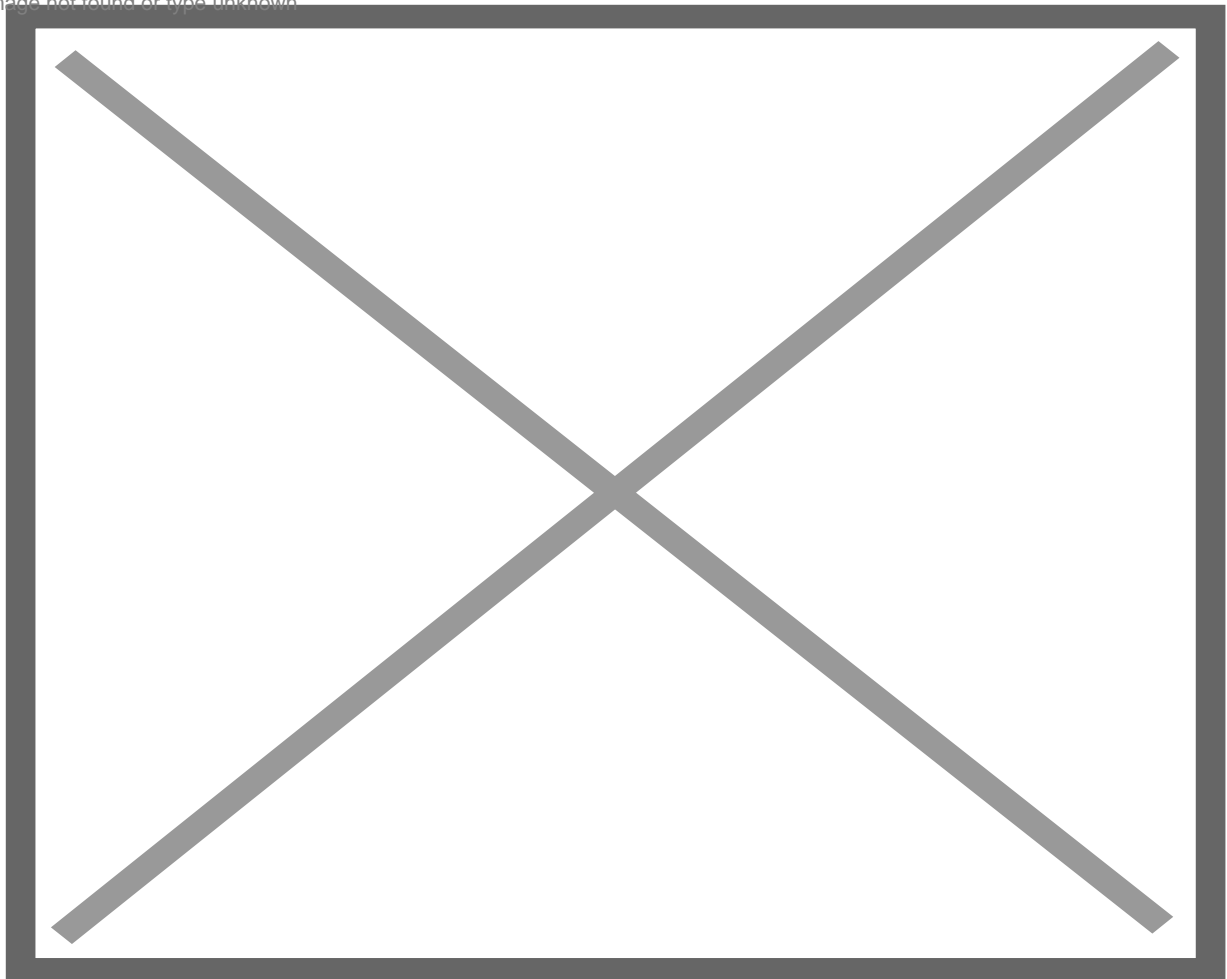
Senator Johnson Highlights Prostate Cancer Battle, Stresses Importance of Annual Screening

Recounting his radiation treatments and cancer-free diagnosis, Johnson vowed to advocate for awareness and early detection, urging men over 40 to prioritize their health with simple PSA tests

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Senator Franklin Johnson By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

When it came his turn to speak, during the first sitting of the 36th Legislature, Senator Franklin Johnson elected to share with the territory his personal triumph last year over an often-terrifying illness – prostate cancer.

After presenting his mother and partner with a bouquet of flowers each, Mr. Johnson played a video message for those watching in person and online. “On May 21st [2024] I was diagnosed

with prostate cancer,” he began, recounting how prior to that moment, he and his doctor had been monitoring the increasing numbers on his PSA test results. Following the diagnosis came a series of medical appointments for various scans, tests and second opinions, until a treatment plan was developed with oncologists at the Moffitt Cancer Center in Florida.

The decision was made to deliver targeted radiotherapy with the use of two small devices Mr. Johnson referred to as “rice grains” implanted into his prostate. In the procedure, which took place in mid-November, a gel barrier between prostate and bowel was also put in place, to ensure that the ensuing radiation treatment would not damage other internal organs. Once the devices were in place, Johnson was then required to undergo a series of 20 radiation treatments throughout the month of December. “There was no kind of reaction to my body, everything was done very well,” he recounted. On the last day of the year, and of his treatment regimen, the lawmaker walked out to a virtual family gathering, with loved ones watching online as he “rang the bell,” signaling a cancer-free diagnosis.

On Monday, as he did on December 31, Mr. Johnson emphasized the importance of early detection, noting that his treatment could have been even less intensive if he had decided to take action earlier instead of waiting for his PSA test results to rise to alarming levels.

“We don't talk enough about prostate cancer,” he said. “We don't share the information with others.” The lawmaker argued that, because this type of malignancy was particularly slow-growing, “it's a cancer that we should be able to win if we just do our tests in a timely manner.” He vowed to be a fierce advocate on the issue, encouraging men to undergo annual screening after the age of 40. “We should not be dying from prostate cancer,” Mr. Johnson declared. “All it takes is a blood test, a very simple PSA to find out if you have an enlarged prostate...and after that, then you can go forward in doing a biopsy, if that is needed,” he explained.

“When you hear someone that died from...prostate cancer, I should say is because they never did a check. They never find out what their status is,” he noted, once again emphasizing that his treatment was successful and went relatively smoothly because “again, I caught it early.”

Mr. Johnson professed alarm at the numbers of people he knew that had been diagnosed with the ailment at one point or another, but expressed relief that all those individuals, like him, were proactive in seeking and obtaining early treatment. “I'm pleading to the men in this community and throughout the world, please go and do your prostate PSA test, because you can live a very long and productive life,” the lawmaker urged. “I intend to live a long, good life,” he declared, as those assembled in the legislative chamber chuckled.