

'We Bear the Burden Without the Benefit': Violet Leads Push for Congress to Extend Affordable Care Act to USVI

Senator Kurt Violet says the federal shutdown over ACA subsidies exposes deep inequities, arguing Virgin Islanders share national burdens but are denied the very healthcare benefits at issue and deserve inclusion under the Affordable Care Act.

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Sen. Kurt Violet. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE.

The 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands has introduced a resolution urging the U.S. Congress and the Trump Administration to extend the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to the territory, pointing to the ongoing federal government shutdown as a stark reminder of the inequities faced by Virgin

Islanders.

The resolution was sponsored by Senator Kurt Violet, Majority Leader of the Legislature, who described the situation as a striking example of unequal treatment. “It’s deeply ironic,” Violet said. “Federal services here are halted because of a fight over healthcare subsidies our residents don’t even receive. We bear the burden without sharing the benefit.”

The measure underscores how the Virgin Islands continues to be affected by national policy decisions despite being excluded from the very programs causing the disputes, according to Violet. The shutdown, triggered by disagreements over ACA subsidies and tax credits, has disrupted services across the United States and its territories — including the Virgin Islands — even though Virgin Islanders do not benefit from the ACA’s provisions.

Lawmakers framed the appeal as an issue of fairness, service, and national integrity. The resolution notes that Virgin Islanders serve in the U.S. Armed Forces and National Guard at rates equal to or higher than those of many states and that the territory provides vital support to U.S. military operations in the Caribbean.

“The federal government often speaks about equity and inclusion. That commitment should extend to the people of the Virgin Islands. We are Americans — we serve, we sacrifice, and we deserve the same access to affordable health care as every other citizen,” said Violet.

He noted that excluding the territory from ACA benefits has left many families struggling. Lawmakers said the omission has contributed to higher uninsured rates and limited affordable options for health coverage. “Hardworking families are making impossible choices between paying for insurance or other essentials,” Violet said. “Inclusion under the ACA would change lives here.”

Under the resolution, the Legislature will forward its appeal to the President of the United States, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Speaker of the House, the President of the Senate, and the Virgin Islands’ Delegate to Congress. The document seeks to bring national attention to what lawmakers view as a longstanding disparity in healthcare policy between the territories and the mainland.

“If Virgin Islanders are affected by federal shutdowns, we should also be protected by federal benefits,” Violet concluded.