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Sen. Jackson Announces Completion of Work at Smithsonian to Save Historic Journals

Government / **Published On April 01, 2020 10:08 AM /**

Staff Consortium **April 01, 2020**

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Senator Myron Jackson announced Tuesday that the Smithsonian Institution has completed the major work needed to preserve twenty bound volumes of original, historic Legislative Journals dating from the 1917 Transfer to the 1950s that were at risk because of damages sustained by Hurricanes Irma and Maria that struck the territory in 2017.

On Tuesday, in conjunction with Transfer Day, a short preview video on the project was uploaded to the Legislature's social media page at www.facebook.com/LegislatureUSVI.

“As we reflect on the 103rd anniversary of Transfer Day, and the birth of the Virgin Islands of the United States, I applaud the work of the Smithsonian in partnering with us to save the rich history of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands,” Mr. Jackson said. “These archives give insight into the

actions taken by lawmakers through the course of our existence. They are a vital resource for the institution, students of history, teachers, genealogists, former senators, and more and we look forward to offering them electronically to the public.”

The “USVI Legislative Records Recovery Project,” which Mr. Jackson spearheaded in 2018, gave permission to staff of the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative and the BELFOR Restoration Team to assess the condition of the inventory; remove Collections from the Legislative Archives properties in St. Thomas and St. John; transport the documents to BELFOR located in Ft. Worth, Texas; and freeze dry the Collection in consultation with the custodian to inactivate the mold on the materials.

The Smithsonian funded the project, to include digitization of the journals, which will be available soon through the Legislature’s website, according to the release. The USVI Legislative Records and Recovery Project commenced on Friday, July 27, 2018. An amended agreement between the Legislature and the Smithsonian to return to the physical journals goes through September 1, 2020.

March 31, 1917 is recognized as the date of the formal sale and transfer of the former Danish West Indies from Denmark to the United States of America, and the birth of the Virgin Islands.

“Transfer Day is an opportunity to reflect on our progress as a people. That process is made easier by having access to our records,” Mr. Jackson said. “Gaining electronic copies of our historic legislative journals is a critical step forward in our technological age, given the current situation we face due to COVID-19 and any similar challenges we might encounter in the future. Thank you to Dr. Richard Kurin and the rest of the team at the Smithsonian for all the work they put into making this a reality.”