

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Governor De Jongh Vetoes Marijuana Decriminalization Bill

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In taking action on a slew of bills as part of the government's fiscal year 2015 budget, Governor de Jongh revealed that he had vetoed two of the measures, one of which is Sen. Terrence "Positive" Nelson's marijuana decriminalization bill.

Senator Nelson had been pushing for the measure for much of his tenure in the 30th Legislature, and succeeded at having all the senators fall in line with his push for decriminalization. De Jongh, however, saw too many discrepancies with the bill, including the way it conflicted with the judicial system, among other things.

The "measure as drafted represents an inconsistent application of law as it pertains to private employees versus" government employees, it curtails the government's ability to "enforce and regulate workplace rules and codes of conduct, particularly in those areas involving hazardous jobs, public safety and the operation of heavy equipment," and it compromises the ability of the "judiciary to effectively enforce its orders pertaining to pre-trial release and bail," de Jongh stated in his transmittal letter to the Senate.

Since its passage in the 30th Legislature, bill No. 30-0018 has stirred much controversy, as concerned citizens began taking a closer look at the measure, identifying loopholes that would leave law enforcement officers ill-equipped to uphold certain laws.

In an interview with this reporter [last month](#), Nelson said marijuana was not his number 1 priority; instead, he cast blame on the media for stirring the pot.

"Let me straighten you out," Senator Nelson said, "the marijuana issue is a hot topic, everybody is talking about it. It's not me, it's on the radio — everybody's talking about it. That's what they have to the front. Twenty-three states have passed [marijuana bills] so it's a big issue, but it's not really my priority. Of course it's not."

Senator Nelson added that the controversy surrounding marijuana was not something he ever intended, as all along he only wished to place the topic before the people before any other step was taken.

"This whole marijuana business that's going all over the place [and has become] viral, what did I want," Nelson said, "I wanted to ask the people what they think about it before we took any initiative on it."

It is now up the senators of the 30th Legislature to override Gov. de Jongh's veto or leave it as is.

Image Credit: SCMP