

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Bill Signed Into Law By Gov. De Jongh Broadens Use Of Inmate Labor

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Prisoners incarcerated in the U.S. Virgin Islands will now perform labor in more parts of the territory than previously allowed, thanks to a [bill sponsored by Senator Myron Jackson](#), which extends prisoner labor to roadwork, and maintenance "of other government buildings and for other purposes."

"To the extent practicable, the Commissioner of Public Works shall use a prison inmate workforce for all roadwork, cemetery maintenance, waterways, drainage, and maintenance and repairs of government buildings. The prison inmate workforce used by the Commissioner of Public Works under this subsection must consist of only misdemeanor and non-violent felon inmates, and inmates whose remaining prison term

do not exceed six months in duration," reads a portion of the bill.

Tagged onto the fiscal year 2015 budget, Bill 30-0350 was signed into law by Governor de Jongh, along with 44 other measures, including a bill establishing the Virgin Islands Sports Commission and a National Parks policy within the Department of Sports, a bill appropriating \$2 million for the purchasing of text books for public schools, and more.

De Jongh also rejected two bills, one which sought to decriminalize small amounts of marijuana possession, and another that would provide equitable distribution of property during a divorce, because of an unrelated amendment that created a new category of casinos.

"The manner in which this amendment was offered and enacted without going through the Committee process and without the proper due diligence is troubling," the governor wrote of the casino amendment bill, "especially when the charrettes conducted in both the Christiansted and Frederiksted communities...definitively revealed that residents did not want casino gaming as part of their community development plans."

The casino bill was sponsored by Senator Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly. Full details [here](#).