

The Virgin Islands Consortium

30th Legislature Highlights Work, Says 232 Bills Signed Into Law

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Cynthia Graham **December 13, 2014**



As its final days are winding down, Senate President Shawn-Michael Malone looked back on the tenure of the 30th Legislature and highlighted what he believes to be some of the body's accomplishments in a recent press conference held in St. Thomas.

"When we took office in 2013 we imposed austerity measures such as eliminating cell phones and personal vehicles, and we revamped policies involving travel, vehicles and procurement in response to the serious issues raised in a federal audit of the Legislature," Sen. Malone said. "The 30th Legislature pledged accountability, transparency, increased productivity, and to lead by example and we were successful despite the fact that our work was somewhat overshadowed by the controversial issues

we were forced to address in the midst of an extremely challenging economic climate. Now is the time for us to highlight some of what we achieved."

Senator Malone referenced the results of federal audits released in 2012 that revealed deficiencies in the Senate, largely dealing with matters of the 28th Legislature; however, he said it was evident changes needed to be made.

"My initial priority was to develop new policies that increased accountability and limited opportunities for abuse," Senator Malone said. "In fact, I believe that many of these new policies must be codified in our law."

He pointed out that new policies for travel, procurement, as well as ADA compliance and vehicle use were set in place as were a new employee handbook and workplace harassment policy. Additionally, he touted the Legislature's posting of its quarterly financial reports online, as well as its efforts to make official documents available to the public and media through its website.

"I called for a 50 percent reduction in paper in order to cut costs and be more environmentally friendly," Senator Malone said. "We did our best to distribute information electronically whenever possible."

To date, the Senator said 523 bills were drafted in the 30th Legislature and 232 of those became law.

"We worked to balance two budgets this term, restored salaries to Government workers, refunded monies owed retirees and dealt with some very important issues to revitalize the economy, curb crime and improve our infrastructure," he said. "The budget process was particularly challenging given that in both fiscal years the Governor failed to send down a balanced budget as required by law."

Sen. Malone also made note of the 30th Legislature establishing an internship program, approving an agreement for an alternative energy study and establishing the Legislature's Youth Advisory Council.

"We did some fantastic work this term and we must give credit where it is due," he said. "I wish the incoming members of the 31st Legislature the very best and hope that they will adopt the accountability measures we put in place and move forward with these other initiatives."

The term officially ends on January 12, 2015, when the 31st Legislature is scheduled to be sworn in.