

The Virgin Islands Consortium

DLCA To Publish 'Blacklist' of Retailers Engaging In Wrongful Business Practices

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The Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (DLCA) is putting local retailers on notice of its intent to begin publishing a 'blacklist' containing the names of businesses engaging in unscrupulous practices so consumers would be able to make better informed decisions when shopping for goods or services, according to Devin Carrington, DLCA commissioner-designee.

Carrington said the new initiative is currently in the works and is all a part of his commitment to protect the territory's consumers.

"One of the things I'm doing toward my drive to be more protective of consumers, is to start publicizing the names of establishments who are notorious for various citations that we issue," he said. "Whether it be expired food or spoiled goods, establishments that don't honor refunds or don't honor coupons, don't honor the tag price on a shelf item -- because one of our mandates is educative. We have to educate the public."

The initiative, Carrington said, will serve to ensure retailers are providing the best goods and services to consumers.

"The public can only make best choices as to where to shop, and they can only be cognizant of how to shop, with information such as what I'm speaking of. This will do two things: it will educate the consumer and help them make wiser decisions. But it will also put a blemish on the face of the retailer, so that they in turn [will say], 'I don't want to be on Carrington's blacklist, so I got to do better'."

The commissioner said he will be careful with how he implements the new program, and noted he would not include any citations that are outstanding.

"In other words, there are citations that are outstanding and we've got to conduct hearings," Carrington explained. "[However], once a case is resolved, any information that I have in respect to violators, is public information, and people have a right to know. And generally, people are not going to walk into my office; my job is to educate the public."

Carrington revealed to *VI Consortium* that DLCA already has a list of local businesses found to be in violation.

The commissioner also spoke of implementing a grading system for businesses whereby they would be rated on a scale. That, Carrington said, is in the brainstorming phase.

Carrington, a lawyer by profession, spoke of being on the side of the territory's consumers, which he says will be his primary focus in his new role at the department. He also praised former DLCA Commissioner Wayne Biggs for streamlining the department's licensing processes, which, Carrington says, is now completely computerized.

In light of his predecessor's success with the licensing arm of DLCA, Carrington said he would work on revitalizing the consumer arm of the department, hence his [recent move](#) to subpoena the territory's gas station owners, seeking information on gas purchases dating back six months. Carrington said the department is investigating whether consumers are being overcharged for gas, which is being sold at historically low prices on the U.S. mainland and neighboring Puerto Rico, while the territory continues to see prices at \$3.65 per gallon or higher.

Image Credit: *BET*