

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Six Pack Law Gets A Hearing In St. Thomas

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ST. THOMAS – The U.S. Coast Guard's "six pack" law got a hearing at an open house it hosted recently to field questions about the law that regulates the inspection of charter vessels.

The [Coast Guard](#) dock on St. Thomas was packed with people who came to attend an open house the federal agency conducted Monday to answer questions about the new "six pack" law regulating inspection of charter vessels.

The new law allows for un-inspected passenger vessels in the territory to board up to 12 passengers, instead of six, which was the previous limit.

On April 20, at least 100 people attended the open house and were able to ask questions of Coast Guard marine inspectors and Virgin Islands Shipping Registry inspectors.

The U.S. Coast Guard wants owners or operators of U.S.-flagged, un-inspected boats to self-report their vessel name, owner name, tonnage, length, tonnage, approved passenger capacity, hailing port and contact information once a certifying authority has issued a certificate, it said in a prepared statement.

The six-pack law was sponsored by Rep. Bill Shuster (R-PA) who former Gov. John de Jongh conferred with about the legislation in September 2014.

DeJongh lobbied Shuster for his help in allowing the Virgin Islands government to purchase Coast Guard properties on the St. Thomas waterfront.

When the bill passed in December 2014 [de Jongh said](#) the six-passenger law was “a critical step in our journey to regain our position as the world’s leader in this important industry sector.”

Prior to 1993, when the six-passenger or “six-pack” limitation on U.S. un-inspected vessels was imposed, the territory’s harbors were populated with large numbers of chartered yachts that brought “millions in jobs and annual revenue to the local economy,” de Jongh said at the time.

But the limit to vessels carrying only six passengers in territorial waters caused the industry to move to the British Virgin Islands, which follows international standards and has a twelve-passenger limitation on charter yachts.

During a meeting of the Senate Committee on Rules and Judiciary April 28, Sen. Sammuell Sanes said the Coast Guard had acquired two new vessels for use in the Virgin Islands to help patrol the waters for drug, gun and human traffickers.

Boats operating on St. Croix can send an email notification to Resident Inspection Office in St. Croix at d-07-dg-secsj-rio_st_croix@usg.mil.

Boats operating on St. Thomas can send an email notification to Marine Safety Detachment in St. Thomas at d07-dgsecsj-msd-st-thomas@uscg.mil.

People who want to report illegal passenger vessel operations in the Virgin Islands can contact the Marine Safety Detachment in the Resident Inspection Office in St. Croix at 772-5557 or on St. Thomas at 776-3497.