

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Potter Vetoes Second Chance, Net-Metering Bills, Approves Good Samaritan, Tourism-Related Measures

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ST. THOMAS -- Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter, the territory's acting governor until Governor Kenneth Mapp returns from his [week-long Florida trip](#), has taken action on five pieces of legislation [recently approved](#) by the senate, vetoing some while approving others, according to a press release issued by Government House late Wednesday.

The acting governor signed into law bill No. 31-0017, an act that relates to the development of marine tourism in the Virgin Islands. The measure charges the Dept. of Tourism to hire employees to develop a marine tourism plan and promote marine tourism based on the availability of funds. The bill was sponsored by Sen. Janette Millin Young and co-sponsored by Sens. Kurt Vialet and Clifford Graham.

Potter said he approved the measure with hesitancy, because finding funding to carry out its mandates could become "problematic."

He also approved the 'Good Samaritan Law' -- bill No. 31-0030 -- which extends immunity to all people who assist in health emergencies by granting first responders immunity from liability. The bill was sponsored by Sen. Sammuel Sanes.

Another measure, bill No. 31-0067, was approved by Potter. The legislation provides \$75,000.00 for a feasibility study to establish a plant for processing local fruits in the territory.

"This feasibility study will allow the government to seek grants in order to pursue such a plant. I would also recommend that the study include what type of food processing plant would be recommended for the territory, potential competitors and ancillary services that should be included in the build out of the food processing plant," said Potter in his transmittal letter to the 31st Legislature.

The acting governor vetoed bill No. 31-0067, which would allow residential net metering electrical customers with less than 10-kilowatt solar power systems to sell surplus power back to the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority. The measure, sponsored by Sen. Sammeul Sanes, would allow WAPA to get maximum full-price net metering payments after 2025.

Potter said he vetoed the legislation because, "in good conscience, I cannot approve this bill when it places additional financial burden on the rate-paying customers who are not part of the net metering system."

The lieutenant governor also vetoed bill No. 31-0094, "The Second Chance For Jobs and Education After A Misdemeanor Conviction Act", which sought to allow people convicted of misdemeanors to file a petition to appeal for expungement of the conviction if certain requirements are met, and after waiting for a certain period of time after their release from prison based on how much time they served. The shorter the time in prison, the shorter the waiting period before the petition can legally be filed.

Potter said while he's in agreement with the overall idea of the measure, sponsored by Sen. Nereida "Nellie" Rivera-O'Reilly and co-sponsored by Sen. Sammuel Sanes, "there are numerous serious concerns in both the bill and in the existing law that should be addressed, to better balance the interests of the offenders in being restored to society and the public's interest. Accordingly, for the forgoing reasons, I must veto the legislation. In doing so, I ask our legislators to revisit this important issue."