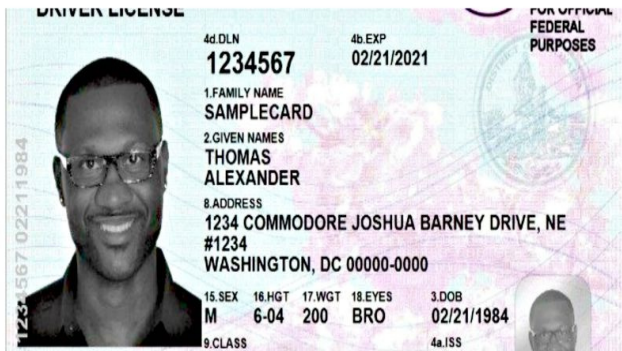


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Blyden To Introduce Bill Giving Undocumented Immigrants Driver's License, BMV Supports Measure

VIC News / **Published On July 23, 2015 10:40 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **July 23, 2015**



ST. THOMAS -- At a Committee on Finance hearing held at the Earl B. Ottley Legislative Hall this morning, Bureau of Motor Vehicle Director, Lawrence Olive, said he would support legislation that seeks to create a path whereby undocumented immigrants living in the territory would be given driver's licenses.

Olive, who was responding to a inquiry posed by Sen. Janette Millin Young concerning the measure, said he'd recently returned from a conference organized by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators in Alabama, where the issuance of driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants was discussed.

Olive said fifteen states had already passed similar measures, along with neighboring Puerto Rico, and that he was receiving legal advice from attorneys on how to move forward. Even so, the director expressed support for the measure, sponsored by Sen. Marvin Blyden.

"It's not only a great revenue stream but it would also be a crime-fighting tool for law enforcement," Olive said.

Millin Young also expressed support for the incoming bill.

"I wonder how the Virgin Islands public feels about it, because the way I see it, the undocumented becomes documented, [and] if I was undocumented, I wouldn't want to be documented like that, because it's easier for the law enforcement to just find me and take me elsewhere," she said.

Asked whether it was BMV's responsibility to report undocumented individuals to Homeland Security, Olive said he was in the process of doing research, looking at measures already passed in various states, before forging ahead.

And in relation to the process, Olive said undocumented individuals would require some form of identification that reveals pertinent information as to date and place of birth, among other important identifying details before getting the license.

These undocumented individuals "would now have facial recognition, biometric fingerprints, date of birth, weight [and other] features, so it would be something that law enforcement will benefit from, knowing that these persons were undocumented and now we have these different components that we can use," Olive added.

Blyden said the legislation will "be coming out soon," but did not give specifics as to how the measure would work. Calls placed to his office for a copy of the draft were not returned as of press time.

In May, former Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen, called upon the territory's lawmakers to consider the issuance of driver's licenses to individuals who are here illegally.

"I have long supported having a provisional license or some legal document allowing individuals living in the U.S. Virgin Islands, who are not legal residents to drive, and have discussed it with local and federal law enforcement who, I will have to admit, have universally been opposed to the idea. I have been told that BMV has been faced with many individuals seeking licenses who don't have documentation of legally being here," Christensen said.

Olive, in responding to a question posed by Sen. Tregenza Roach, said the license would be for one year, and would include many restrictions. "Every year that individual would have to come and renew that license," the director said.