

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Senator Calls On Seaborne Airlines To Adjust Rates

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ST. CROIX -- Senator Kenneth Gittens said he is keeping a close watch on the steady increase in cost of inter-island air travel across the territory, according to a press release Gittens issued on Tuesday.

In a letter to Seaborne executive, Mr. Gary Foss, the senator asked for a re-evaluation of rates and said the islands of the territory are uniquely different and that their full experience cannot be collectively realized if the cost of travel is astronomical.

Gittens said there has been a steady increase in airfare for travel within the territory that is crippling business' networking capabilities, hindering opportunities for family bonding, limiting social/cultural growth and exchange between the islands.

"It is ridiculous when you think of how the rates, particularly for Seaborne, have been on the rise in recent years and I am now calling for a reduction in the ticket rates," the second-term senator said. "Realizing that we are a territory divided solely by 40 miles of the Caribbean Sea, it should not cost more to travel between islands than it is to travel to the continental United States, as we've seen occasionally."

Seaborne Airlines, one of *The Virgin Islands Consortium's* advertising partners, has moved to allay the senator's concerns by making available a special rate for inter-island travel at \$79 each way. However, the ticket needs to be purchased 7 days in advance, according to the [ad](#), which goes live on *The Consortium* tonight.

Senator Gittens said the Virgin Islands Government was instrumental in lending a helping hand to the airline several years ago when their financial outlook was bleak and because of the assistance, they were able to see a turn around and reap financial gains.

"Since our generous bailout to Seaborne, the company has relocated its headquarters from St. Croix to Puerto Rico. When I look at this, I am of the opinion that Seaborne is not acknowledging its obligation to the territory. They must be fair in setting its rates, realizing that the people of the territory deserve the freedom to travel within the territory without experiencing a financial hardship," said Gittens.

The lawmaker said he realizes that running the airline is a business built on making profits, but the profit margins should not be expected to be such that it creates a burden on the passengers.

"Having to pay sometimes as much as \$300 for a roundtrip ticket between the islands is something that our residents should never have to experience," Gittens contends. "Travel between the islands should be affordable to ensure the maximum experience of the traditionally close-knit Virgin Islands community."

He concluded: "I am again calling on Seaborne executives to reevaluate their business plans and rate adjustments to assist the territory's visitors and residents during a time when we are all in need of a bit of relief."