

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Kills 'Fatally Flawed' Inter-Island Ferryboat Travel Bill

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ST. THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp has vetoed bill [No. 31-0137](#) — an act establishing the Virgin Islands Ferryboat Fund as a separate and distinct fund in the Treasury of the Virgin Islands, calling the measure "fatally flawed."

The measure sought to reestablish affordable ferry travel between St. Croix and St. Thomas, which came to a halt several years ago.

Sponsored by Senate President Neville James, the bill saw universal support from the senators, some of whom asked that their names be added to the measure. They also highlighted the many benefits a revival of ferry service between the islands would bring to

the territory.

According to Acting Commissioner of the Department of Public Works (DPW), Gustav James, who was summoned to give testimony on the measure [during a hearing in early July](#), the government had already secured \$7.5 million to purchase three vessels costing between \$8-\$10 million each. However, James said the process of searching for the first vessel had already commenced since they intended to purchase the ferryboats as funding became available.

Funds for the service, according to the bill, would be provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration Ferryboats and Terminal, and monies provided from "time-to-time" by the Legislature would remain in the fund until expended. The bill also charges the commissioner of finance to submit quarterly reports of the fund's disbursements and its "unobligated balance."

But in a release issued late Tuesday revealing the governor's action on numerous bills, Mapp contended that the measure was flawed because a section within the legislation that says "all funds," represents a broad reference that includes federal grants -- the latter of which cannot be appropriated by the Legislature "for deposits into named funds of the Government of the Virgin Islands."

Senators were excited about the prospects of inter-island travel that would once more be affordable.

At the July hearing, At-Large Sen. Almando "Rocky" Liburd said he would like to see the project come to life because it would finally unite residents of the territory.

"I think this is an excellent idea, but I just want to caution people that this is not a cheap idea," said the At-Large senator. Liburd said the service's success would be dependent on the quality of the ride, so making sure that the right boats were purchased would have been of utmost importance.

"It's probably the best thing that could happen to the Virgin Islands because we're going to bring our islands together," he added. "We will bring our people together. This St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John will end, because people can travel at a reasonable rate. So make it a real priority because you're going to see a change in the way we live."

Feature Image: \$8 million ferryboat similar to what the VI Government was considering.