

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Gittens Condemns St. John Property Tax Assessments; Drafts Legislation To Freeze Valuation At 2012 Level

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ST. JOHN -- Senator Kenneth L. Gittens is joining residents across the territory, specifically on this island, in protesting what he says are skyrocketing property tax bills without justification.

That's according to a press release Gittens' office issued last week, contending that residents here have seen increases to their bills while no changes have been made to the properties in question.

"The complaints flooding into my office are increasing now to almost on a daily basis and the same was expressed last evening on St. John during a town hall meeting," said Gittens, chairman of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary. "Residents are stating primarily that their property tax bills that have recently come out are increased exponentially without any changes to their property conditions having been made."

Senator Gittens said property owners were placed at a disadvantage during the last administration when property tax bills were not sent out, and now they are forced into playing catch up and paying multiple years at the same time, even as residents are finding it more difficult to cope in the territory's lagging economy.

"On top of this snowballing issue of the increases, playing catch up has created a greater hardship on the residents. The backs of property owners are up against the wall with seemingly nowhere to turn, because they protest that even when they file appeals with the Board of Tax Review, they get not even as much as a notice of acknowledgement and the issues languishes over years with the expectation still there for them to pay the outlandish bills," he said.

The senator said he has drafted legislation to hold the St. John residential property tax bills at the 2012 Real Property rate until a proper assessment is completed and reviewed by the Legislature, and is hoping for support from his colleagues and those with oversight of the property tax issues to bring some resolution soon.

"We have residents who are being forced to give up their property that has been in their families for years, for far below what it is worth, just because they can't pay these taxes, we have got to do something and do it sooner, rather than later," Gittens concluded.

Feature Image: A St. John home belonging to [Villa Kismet](#), on the market [now](#) for some \$13,500,000. Image courtesy Sotheby International Realty.