

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Senators Highlight Important Measures Included In \$661 Million Budget Bill

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ST. THOMAS -- In a protracted Senate session that went into the wee hours of Thursday morning, senators of the 31st Legislature passed a myriad of important bills -- the largest of them being the Fiscal Year 2016 budget of over \$661 million, with \$561 million being appropriated to the various government departments and agencies.

It was a long night indeed, and the lawmakers took turns highlighting the work that they've done over the last nine months.

To quell criminal activity, the legislators highlighted the budget increases of the Bureau of Corrections so that it could hire more officers; Department of Justice to better equip the

beleaguered department in its investigations; the Superior Court as it strives to better prosecute perpetrators of crime, and the Virgin Islands Police Department for overall improvements at the government's main law enforcement arm.

"We want to see our boots on the ground taking action, reducing crime in the territory and prosecuting the individuals that caused the crime," Senator Clifford Graham, chairman of the powerful Committee on Finance, said. "We want to send a message to the criminal elements here in this community."

Senator Kurt Violet mentioned some \$4 million being taken from the \$250 million federal Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicles, (GARVEE) bonds, to add to the \$7 million already available to purchase a ferryboat in an effort to speed up the process of restarting inter-island travel by sea between St. Croix and this island that came to a halt years ago.

Also included in the budget was \$30 million for the UVI medical school.